

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Poverty, unrest and the response in Surrey**

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POVERTY, UNREST  
AND  
THE RESPONSE IN SURREY, 1815–1834

BY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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## Abstract

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The organisation of this thesis is thematic, in order to disentangle the complexity and significance of the poor laws in a local area. It is a local study of poverty and the operation of the poor laws. The aim of this detailed survey is to consider the role of poor law administration in Surrey within the national context, and by examining the operation of the poor law at the parish level, to understand the experiences of real people, both ratepayer and the poor. The thesis also considers whether the old poor law was fundamentally defective or whether it can be viewed as a valid response to increasing poverty. It stresses, the relationship between the central and local authorities and the administration of poor relief in rural Surrey outside the Metropolitan area and the hundred of Brixton, Wallington and Kingston for the period 1815–1834 (see Map 1.0). It recognises that before 1834, variety rather than uniformity characterised the administration of poor relief in England and Wales. It also argues, that power and authority, within the English state was the product of negotiation between the centre and the localities.

Chapter One deals with the historiography of the old poor law and chapter Two considers the decline of rural industry in Surrey, coupled with continuing economic problems in agriculture and falling demand for labour, which had a devastating effect in rural parishes. Chapter Three details the administrative system of poor relief during a period that saw costs of relief rise, while Chapter Four examines the operation of the relief system at parish level outside the workhouse. Chapter Five examines the provision of indoor relief in Surrey, and Chapter Six considers the position of the ratepayers and their ability and willingness to pay increased poor rates, at a time of agricultural depression combined with rising unemployment. Chapter Seven considers the position of the labourer, when endemic poverty meant that a labourer's ability to provide for his family without asking the parish for assistance was more a matter of luck than personal industry. Seasonal

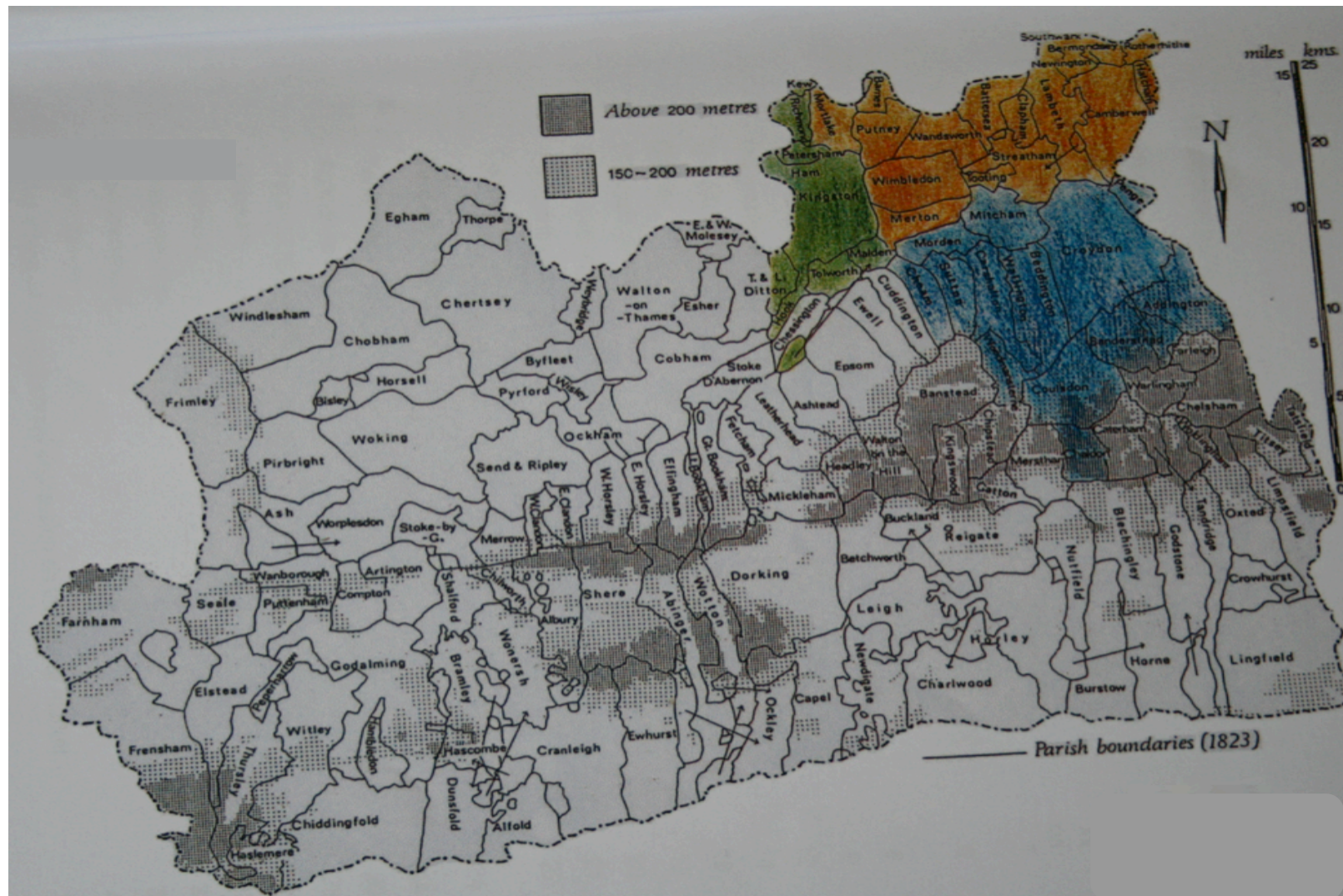
unemployment exacerbated the situation, forcing farm workers on to the parish for assistance, especially in winter months. Chapter Eight considers the unrest of 1830–32, the so-called Swing Riots. Many studies of poor law only make fleeting reference to the riots. This study sees the disturbances as an integral part of the work and includes a detailed investigation into the riots within the social and cultural context. In Surrey, as in other parts of rural southern England, they took place against the background of the progressive pauperisation of labourers, when parishes were finding it more difficult to provide relief for the growing numbers of unemployed, able-bodied agricultural labourers. Labourers saw the riots as a rising against unemployment and the abuses of the poor law system that seemed unable to provide sufficient relief for their needs. The thesis ends by examining the reaction of the parishes immediately after the riots before the introduction of the 1834 poor law, when attempts were made at parish level to alleviate the situation and to stop further unrest.



Map 1.1 - Surrey Parishes

Not included the hundreds of:

■ Brixton   
 ■ Wallington   
 ■ Kingston



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## **Abbreviations Used**

AEI	Agricultural Employment Institute
NA	National Archives Kew
GL	Guildhall Library London
LFS	Labourers Friend Society
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
RA	Royal Archives Windsor
SHC	Surrey History Centre
WSRO	West Sussex Record Office
FACHRS	Family And Community Historical Research Society

## **Notes on Style**

References are printed in full when first mentioned in each chapter. Thereafter they are given in an abbreviated form.

## **Note**

In the years 1815 to 1834 the financial year ran from 25<sup>th</sup> March to 24<sup>th</sup> March

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## Methodology and Sources

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The two most important sources for the study of the old poor law are vestry minutes and the account books used by the overseers of the poor. The administration of parish poor relief in rural Surrey, might be described as similar on the basis of extant surviving parish rate assessment books, overseers accounts and vestry minutes. At the same time it is recognised within each parish there was a certain local diversity, in the manner in which parishes administered the relief system. For example to relieve the increasing number of able-bodied day labourers after the Swing Riots of 1830, the parish of Dorking introduced an emigration scheme and seventeen other parishes introduced labour schemes<sup>1</sup>.

Hindle has pointed out, it is dangerous to generalize on a county-wide or regional pattern of relief spending on the basis “of what might either be an unusually precocious account operated under the auspices of an assiduous collector, overseer or magistrate, or an atypically sophisticated initiative rendered necessary by peculiar economic circumstances.”<sup>2</sup> This is true of Surrey, some large parishes for example Dorking, Egham and Farnham, witnessed the growing sophistication and bureaucratization of the administrative of poor relief and some of the surviving records for these parishes show detailed accounts and vestry minutes but unfortunately they are fragmentary.

Records were examined both in the Surrey History Centre and at local parish depositories. As there was such a wide range of local diversity in the administration of parish welfare practice, all the available poor law records for the 107 rural parishes on Surrey have been consulted. As a result, there are always a number of examples of certain records from which one can discuss trends and key issues. These range from

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<sup>1</sup> Labour schemes operated in Abinger, Albury, Betchworth, Blethingley, Great Bookham, Cranleigh, Elstead, Ewell, Farnham, Frensham, Godstone, Godalming, Horley, West Horsley, Send and Ripley, Shere, Witley, Worplesdon and Woking,

<sup>2</sup> S. Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c.1550–1750* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004), p.233.

overseers accounts, vestry minutes, letter collections, labour schemes, rate assessment books and settlement certificates. Each of these sources enables “the historian of welfare to overhear dialogue”<sup>3</sup> about the organization of parish relief. In addition by adopting this exhaustive method rather than merely sampling the records, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive picture of the administration of poor relief and to understand the individual and parish response to poverty and welfare.

The pattern of record survival for rural Surrey for the period 1815–1834 shows that, of the 107 parishes, only 38 (35 per cent) have extant overseers’ accounts (however fragmentary or interrupted). Only 8 of these 38 parishes have detailed accounts, and only Betchworth have overseers’ accounts for the whole period.<sup>4</sup> The most comprehensive records, detailing formal welfare provision are the parish vestry minutes. Of the parishes, 36 (34 per cent) have surviving minutes and of those 21 are fragmentary or interrupted records. Of these Epsom, Frimley, Shere, Woking and Chertsey have fragmentary select vestry minutes and Dorking has extremely informative select vestry minutes for the period 1819–1834.<sup>5</sup> In total, rate assessment books for 40 parishes have survived (37 per cent) of which there are 30 for the whole period, and 10 for part.

For rural Surrey some overseers’ records are extremely detailed and give the names of the individuals who received relief with the date, the amount and type of assistance provided but most only give lists of names. Few parishes actually recorded the exact occasion when the individual requested relief from the parish and there are only a few examples of overseers’ accounts that give the age of the recipients relieved. Only account books for 18 parishes (16 per cent of all parishes) divide those receiving regular pensions from recipients of casual relief and for the period 1815–1834 only Betchworth has complete records.

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<sup>3</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p.235.

<sup>4</sup> The parishes of Thames Ditton, Egham, Tandridge, Bletchingley, Great Bookham, Lingfield and Mickleham detailed records for only part of the period.

<sup>5</sup> SHC select vestry minutes: 3296/3/1 Epsom, 2589/3/1–2 Frimley, SHER/38/1 Shere, P52/3/45 Woking, P2/1/1 Chertsey, and P65/1/1–2 Dorking.

The account records are most important for the quantitative analysis of the poor law administration. Statistical series derived from both local and national records were used to look at the level of spending. Expenditure charts for Surrey have been prepared using the parish returns to central government, and have been compared to national expenditure figures. Graphically, it can be seen that national poor law expenditure rose during the period and increasing rural poverty was also reflected in Surrey's sustained high relief costs. Over the period it is possible to identify the increasing problems of providing for the large pools of able-bodied poor who were unemployed or underemployed.

Analysis of national and parish data is useful but it must be recognised that certain questions remain. For example, how accurate were the published government returns that so many historians have relied on for local studies on poverty? Wittering has found discrepancies between the returns and the parish accounts in the Thriplow hundred of Cambridgeshire,<sup>6</sup> and the same can be seen in Surrey. Not only do these figures give a partial indication of relief spending but parish poor law expenditure figures are also ambiguous too. Even where returns did correspond to the parish accounts, it is evident from my research on Surrey that these figures were not always the true final figure. At the end of the accounting year some parishes "carried over" certain large bills, to be paid the following year or when the parish felt able to do so. In addition, as few parishes kept proper profit and loss accounts, these outstanding bills were not reflected in the year-end accounts or the annual returns made to parliament.<sup>7</sup> King has recognised these issues in his research.<sup>8</sup> Of course, this could make a significant shortfall in the end-of-year accounts and place further pressure on incoming overseers to balance the books. This is an area for further research that can only be completed at a local level and where indications can be found in parish accounts of such practice.

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<sup>6</sup> S. Wittering, 'How reliable are the government poor law returns' *The Local Historian* August, (2000) 160–164.

<sup>7</sup> SHC P22/5/72 Betchworth, LA2/7/21 Caterham, 3831/1/1 Ewell, and 2568/6/1 Thames Ditton.

<sup>8</sup> King, *Poverty*, pp.88–9.



In addition individual parish poor relief accounts have also been used to break down the different types of relief spending over a period of time. Of course, trying to produce this type of data is difficult because there was no one standardised form of accounting. For Surrey only 8 parishes (7 per cent) itemized spending but these were fragmentary or interrupted records. The introduction of the labour schemes in 17 parishes after 1830 also disguised the level of spending on relief, as some relief payments for labour were then deducted from rating bills, which distorts expenditure figures. Parish expenditure statistics, moreover, do not define the scale of poverty. The provision of relief was dependent on the size of the rate yield and this was determined by what ratepayers were prepared to pay rather than the scale of parish poverty.<sup>9</sup> Of course, the account records themselves are not particularly illuminating in terms of qualitative information on the actual fabric of the lives of those who either administered the relief system, paid for the relief or received relief from the parish. To gain an understanding of parochial administration and the individual's response to poverty, other surviving local sources have been extensively used. These include vestry minute books, private estate papers, and documents relating to settlement, removal, bastardy and vagrancy.

Most of the sources of information on pre-1834 workhouses are found in parish records, but unfortunately many of these records are not complete. Before the implementation of the 1834 Poor Law there was no legal obligation on the part of the parish to save their pre- 1834 workhouse records.<sup>10</sup> In addition, many of the pre-1834 workhouse records that have survived are concealed in overseers' accounts and it can be a protracted process for the historian to collect a smattering of information on these institutions. Surviving records which provide information on the quality of life of those receiving indoor relief include the rule books, inventories and dietary regulations and the lists of names of inmates. Unfortunately, there are no complete record sets for rural Surrey. Of the 107 parishes, 12

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<sup>9</sup> S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p.90.

<sup>10</sup> G. W. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales 1601–1834* (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1974), p.87.

(11 per cent), do have some records relating to the administration of indoor relief.<sup>11</sup> Four sources that provide valuable information on pre-1834 workhouses are: the returns made by parishes to central government; Eden's *The State of the Poor* with its appendix of parochial reports; information received in 1833 by the Poor Law Commissioners in answers to the Rural Queries; and the 1834 Royal Commission Report.<sup>12</sup> However, Parliamentary returns that provide the number of poor who were relieved by the workhouse system before 1834 do contain inconsistencies, while the 1834 report reflects the government's *perceived* view of the decayed workhouse system.

It is also important to consider the priorities held by the poor and to gain an understanding of their attitude to the parish authorities. Although there is a paucity of written evidence for Surrey, anonymous Swing letters and autobiographical statements in settlement examinations are important sources that can be utilised to reveal to a certain extent the attitudes and beliefs of the poor. Qualitative information can also be found in pauper correspondence, the letters sent by paupers, or on behalf of the poor, mostly by out-parishioners requesting relief.<sup>13</sup> For most parishes it is a one-sided correspondence as only those letters received by the parish are available. Historians have recognised the importance of these surviving letter collections because they help to illustrate how the actual operation of the poor laws affected the lives of the poor. I have used the few surviving collections of Surrey letters but, unlike the Essex letter collection, only 15 parishes have collections of letters (14 per cent) although they are limited in extent and

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<sup>11</sup> SHC P1/8/1–5 Abinger, P22/5/519–535 Betchworth, 3551/2/4–6 Great Bookham, 3830/4/5 Chessington, 2568/9/3 Thames Ditton, P65/2/1 Dorking, 1505/Box 28 Farnham, P25/4/281 Godstone, P30/7/59 – 61 Horley, 2399/8/4 Lingfield, P10/1/11 Shere and P60/3/6 Walton-On-Thames.

<sup>12</sup> Abstract Returns 1776 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons First series IX 1777 p.172–4, and Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804(175) XIII p.502–13, and Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1818 (82) XIX pp.444–52, and Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey 1834 Appendix B Part 1 XXX pp. 474–89a,b,c,e, and Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws XXVIII 1834 Appendix A part 1 Assistant Commissioners' Reports for Surrey C. Maclean pp. 525–81A, and A. Majendie pp.165–175A, also F. M. Eden, *The state of the poor* 3, 'Surrey parochial report' (London, Frank Cass, reprint 1966) pp.693–726.

<sup>13</sup> S. King, "It is impossible for our vestry to judge his case into perfection from here" Managing the distance dimensions of poor relief', *Rural History* 16 (2005) 161–89 .

time span, they have proved to be a valuable source.<sup>14</sup> In addition I have been able to use a most informative source namely the 144 Petworth emigrant letters (which include the Dorking emigrant letters) sent from Canada after emigration.<sup>15</sup> The Petworth Emigration scheme operated between 1832–37 and the letters were regularly published both in Petworth and Dorking. Although not all the letters used from this collection were written by the Dorking party, all were written by those in low wage occupations, comprising mainly agricultural labourers from the southern counties who emigrated as part of the Petworth Scheme because of economic difficulties. These letters represent the record of the poor law from “below” and provide a rich archive of personal testimonies that give a wonderful insight into life in the rural south of England.

There is limited information on emigration before 1834 and of course this hampers parish emigration research. Before 1834 there is a paucity of detailed listings of the participants. Ship passenger lists for Canadian destinations have not survived for this period. The only indication of the numbers of emigrants leaving England for Canada up until 1834 by parish-assisted schemes were the records kept in the Emigrant Office in Quebec. Alexander Carlisle Buchanan compiled these figures from 1828 onwards. Between the years 1831 and 1834 he relied on letters from the sponsors or, information from arriving ships to record numbers of arriving assisted emigrants.<sup>16</sup> Using these informal sources he recorded a total of 12, 677 emigrants arriving in Upper Canada assisted by the parishes or landlords.

The study also attempts to bring together material and interpretations from both contemporary commentators and modern historians. It also considers legal handbooks

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<sup>14</sup> T. Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters 1731 – 1837* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001) and S. King, T. Nutt, and A. Tomkins, (eds), *Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Britain* (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2006) and SHC P22/5/536–978 Betchworth, 3624/4/19 Albury, P20/7/2 Bletchingley, LA2/2/24 Caterham, P28/4/6–685 Chaldon, P2/3/15–16 Chertsey, 3830/4/5 and 3830/4/1214 Chessington, P34/14/1 Chobham, 2516/5/4 Egham, 1505/Box 37–38 Farnham, MIC/9/5 Mickleham, P3/5/38–40, P3/5/38–40 Oxted, 1956/1/13 – 17 Shere, P52/12/1–75, P52/12/1–75

<sup>15</sup> W. Cameron, S. Haines, M. McDougall Maude, *English immigrant voices* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> R. Baehre, 'Pauper emigration to Upper Canada in the 1830s' *Histoire Sociale* 14/28 (1981) 345–48.

and guides for magistrates and parish officers. In addition, it integrates the local experience with the national picture and makes reference to the relevant statutes, parliamentary select committees and political opinion of the time. The situation in Surrey is further contextualised by drawing on secondary literature, both published and unpublished, on the operation of the poor law in other counties.

It is important not to underestimate the unrest in the county during the Swing riots of 1830–32. In the parish records there are very few direct references to the disturbances. It is only by using Home Office records and newspaper reports that information can be found on the disturbances. Unfortunately, during this period Surrey did not have its own regional newspaper and so many of the reports on the riots that appeared in the *County Chronicle* were for Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent and Surrey. Therefore, reports for Surrey lack detailed descriptions. There were 65 reported incidents of disturbances in Surrey between 1830–32, considerably more than the 29 incidents cited by Hobsbawn and Rudé.<sup>17</sup> Each incident that has been identified has been fully referenced to the source.

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<sup>17</sup> E. Hobsbawn and G. Rudé (1969) *Captain Swing* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), Appendix 1 pp.312–58.

## Chapter One

### Historiography

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The traditional view of the economics of the old poor law appeared first in the 1834 Report of the Royal Commission that investigated the workings of the law, although the report made no attempt to investigate the causes of unemployment, which was evident in the rural southern counties. None of the questions in the Rural Queries enquired into the reasons for unemployment; parishes only had to consider if unemployment was caused by the indolence of the labourers or by increased population.<sup>1</sup> Kames observed the English relief system had failed to relieve poverty and effectively caused it.<sup>2</sup> Townsend and Malthus both thought the poor laws compounded rather than eased the lot of the poor. Malthus proposed the abolition of the poor law and the encouragement of moral restraint to reduce family size as the only effectual mode of improving the condition of the poor.<sup>3</sup> George Nicholls, one of the three Poor Law Commissioners of 1834, later wrote a history of the poor law. He argued, as Malthus had done, for the reduction of poor relief and the use of the workhouse as a deterrent, believing that the poor were lazy and profligate, intent on working as little as possible and were producing large numbers of children solely to gain parish relief.<sup>4</sup> A crucial defect of the English relief system by the early nineteenth century was seen by many at the time that “it created in the poor too confident an

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners XXVII - XXXVIII, and Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners 1834, Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B. Part 1. XXX pp. 474–89a,b,c,d,e, also Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Reports for Surrey C. H. Maclean pp. 525–81A, and A. Majendie pp.165–75A .

<sup>2</sup> H. Homes, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the history of man* (Edinburgh, W. Creech, 1774).

<sup>3</sup> J. Townsend, *A dissertation on the poor laws/by a well-wisher to mankind*, 1786 (London, W. Flint, 1817), and T.R. Malthus, *Principles of political economy considered with a view to their practical application* (London, W. Pickering, 1836), pp. 217 - 61 and *An Essay on the principle of population: A view of its past and present effects on human happiness* 3 (London, J.M. Dent and Sons, reprint 1958), pp. 35–69.

<sup>4</sup> G. Nicholls, *History of the English poor law* (London, John Murray, 1854), pp. 135–288.

expectation of relief.”<sup>5</sup> The old poor law “had come to be regarded as profligate and extravagant. Costs were seemingly out of control.”<sup>6</sup>

### *A review of poor law studies*

Some of the earliest analyses of the old poor law concentrated on the investigation of the legislative framework that surrounded the poor laws from the perspective of “from above,” that is, central government. At the time, poor law research focused on the production of large surveys of major administrative and relief policy developments, as, for example, Eden’s survey completed in 1797.<sup>7</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century historians were looking at the old poor law from a different point of view and the work of Leonard and the Hammonds considered the history of the poor law in the context of economic and social history.<sup>8</sup> The Webbs, who were Fabian socialists, considered the old poor law as generally harsh and repressive and they campaigned to see the poor laws reformed in order to prevent poverty.<sup>9</sup> Their work replaced Nicholls as the standard account of the history of the old poor law and, as Kidd has pointed out, at the time of publication, the Webbs’ work was viewed as having provided “the definitive history of the poor law.”<sup>10</sup> It must be noted, however, that although the histories written by the Webbs, Leonard and Marshall detailed the local management of poor relief, they did not consider the plight of poor individuals.<sup>11</sup> After 1945 social historians were concerned with constructing a history of social policy and concentrated on researching the bureaucratic nature of the old poor

<sup>5</sup> J. Innes, ‘The state and the poor eighteenth-century England in European perspective’ in *Rethinking Leviathan the eighteenth-century state in Britain and Germany* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p.253.

<sup>6</sup> M. Lyle, ‘Regionality in the late old poor law: the treatment of chargeable bastards from Rural Queries’, *Agricultural History Review*, 53 (2005) 141.

<sup>7</sup> F.M. Eden, *The state of the poor* (London, Frank Cass and Co, 1966 reprint 3 volumes).

<sup>8</sup> E. M. Leonard, *The early history of English poor relief* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1965 reprint), and J. Hammond and B. Hammond, *The village labourer 1760–1832* (London, Longmans Green, 1911 reprint),

<sup>9</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English poor law history Part 1: The old poor law* (London, Frank Cass and Company, 1963 reprint), also *English poor law history Part 2: The last hundred years* (London, Longmans Green, 1929).

<sup>10</sup> A.J. Kidd, ‘Historians or Polemicists? How the Webbs wrote their history of the English poor laws’, *Economic History Review*, 50 (1987) 401.

<sup>11</sup> Webb and Webb, *English poor law part 1*, and Leonard, *The early history*, also D. Marshall, *The English poor in the eighteenth century. A study in social and administrative history* (London, Methuen, 1965 reprint).

law.<sup>12</sup> At the same time Karl Polanyi and E. P. Thompson published important contributions to the history of poor law with a clear Marxist ideological stance, which viewed the poor law as a casualty of capitalist society. These writers placed the poor laws in the context of wider currents of social and economic change and added an important dimension to the understanding of the nineteenth century poor law.<sup>13</sup>

In 1934 Hampson completed a county study on Cambridgeshire, and in the last twenty years greater emphasis has been placed on the local study as a primary way of understanding poverty and welfare between the years 1700–1834.<sup>14</sup> Hitherto, many people working at a local level had been amateurs investigating their own locality, whereas academics worked mostly on a national scale. Researchers now recognise the need to look at the local experience because of the complexity of poor law provision: what the law theoretically did and did not allow and how the law came to be interpreted by local administrators in administering welfare provision in the parish. This was due to the style of local management, a discretionary administration with a paternalist social vision of the old poor law, which led to incredible local diversity in poor law and welfare practice between parishes.<sup>15</sup> In addition, King has shown in *Poverty and Welfare in England* that “England did not have a single welfare system but a number of coalescing regional welfare systems” and only by systematic analysis of national and local sources is it possible to explain the nature of poor relief within local communities.<sup>16</sup> The short-term and reactive nature of much welfare provision and the considerable variety of local welfare

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<sup>12</sup> U.R.Q. Henriques, *Before the welfare state, social administration in early industrial Britain* (London, Longman, 1979), and D. Roberts, *The Victorian origins of the British welfare state* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960), D. Fraser, *The evolution of the British welfare state* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1973).

<sup>13</sup> K. Polanyi, *The great transformation* (New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1944), also E. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, Penguin, 1963).

<sup>14</sup> E. M. Hampson, *The treatment of poverty in Cambridgeshire 1597-1834* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1934).

<sup>15</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing rural England tradition and transformation in local government 1780–1840* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994), and D. Eastwood, *Government and community in the English provinces 1700–1870* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), and S. Hindle, ‘Power Poor Relief and Social Relations in Holland Fen c.1600–1800’, *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998) 67–96 and J. Kent, ‘The centre and the localities: state formation and parish government in England c.1640–1740’, *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995) 363–404 also M. Neuman, *The Speenhamland county poverty and the poor laws in Berkshire 1782–1834* (New York, Garland Publishing, 1982).

<sup>16</sup> S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p.10.

practices is now becoming fully appreciated by historians, “diversity, improvisation and local autonomy,”<sup>17</sup> the keys, and by utilising local sources it is possible to come closer to understanding the real manifestations of poverty and welfare in the local parish community.

Current historians, including Snell and Slack, not only consider the legal and administrative framework of the old poor law but also perceive the old poor law as providing a comprehensive parochial welfare system and recognise the importance of considering the individual experiences of poverty.<sup>18</sup> King has shown that the method by which poor people secured their weekly, monthly and yearly welfare is a very important social issue and needs to be examined at both local and national levels.<sup>19</sup>

Much of the quantitative research that has been completed in relation to parish relief costs is concerned with the comparison of aggregate data between counties or even groups of counties.<sup>20</sup> Until recently the figures mainly used are county totals taken from parochial data in the detailed returns to central government that parliament started to request with more regularity from the early nineteenth century. Broad patterns in the scale of relief expenditure and the number of dependants on the welfare system can be used to create a broad regional framework. More recently historians have collected data at a parochial level as, for example, Baugh and his comparative study of poor relief spending in Essex, Kent and Sussex 1790–1834.<sup>21</sup> King, Neuman, Snell and Boyer have all used parish

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<sup>17</sup> K. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) p.35.

<sup>18</sup> P. Slack, *From Reformation to improvement public welfare in early modern England* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1999), and K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor social change and agrarian England 1660–1900* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), and M.E. Rose, ‘The administration of poor relief in the West Riding of Yorkshire c1820 – 1855’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, 1966), and E.G. Thomas, ‘The treatment of poverty in Berkshire, Essex and Oxfordshire 1723–1840’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1971).

<sup>19</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> M. Blaug, ‘The myth of the old poor law and the making of the new’, *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963) 151–84, and ‘The poor law re-examined’, *Journal of Economic History*, 24 (1964) 229–45.

<sup>21</sup> D. A. Baugh, ‘The cost of poor relief in south-east 1790–1834’, *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975) 50–68.



records to analyse spending on a local basis.<sup>22</sup> King, Hindle and Lyle have also considered significant regional differences in the administration of relief.<sup>23</sup>

### *The provision of outdoor relief*

The provision of outdoor or indoor relief has been a long-debated issue. Traditionally, contemporaries saw the granting of outdoor relief to able-bodied paupers as bad practice because it reduced the incentive to work, increased unemployment rates, lowered the productivity of workers, and caused a decline in landlords' rents, farmers' profits and labourers' wages. In 1786 Joseph Townsend wrote that he considered all forms of relief were unnatural and did not "promote industry and economy" and recommended that relief given to the poor must be "limited and precarious."<sup>24</sup> The Webbs and the Hammonds agreed with the traditional view that the payment of outdoor relief to the able-bodied had a detrimental effect on the rural parish economy.<sup>25</sup> They did not address the question as to why outdoor relief continued to be paid in the parishes before 1834 and increased in the years after 1815, if the overseers and parish vestries did not support the system. In the last twenty-five years the old poor law has been seen by historians in a much more positive light and the provision of outdoor relief has been recognised as a flexible and humane system dealing at a parish level with the increasing problems of providing relief to the pauper population.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> King, *Poverty*, and M. Neuman, 'Speenhamland in Berkshire', in E.W Martin(ed), *Comparative developments in social welfare* (London, Croom Helm, 1972), pp.85–127, and *The Speenhamland county*, Snell, *Annals*, also G. Boyer, *An economic history of the English poor law 1750–1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> M. A. Lyle, 'Regionality in the late old poor law: the treatment of chargeable bastards from Rural Queries', *Agricultural History Review* 53 (2005) pp.141–57, S. Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England, c.1550–1750* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 282–99, and King, *Poverty*, p. 262.

<sup>24</sup> Townsend, *A dissertation*, p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Webb and Webb, *English poor law part 1* pp. 154, 212 and 423, and Hammond and Hammond, *The village*, pp.225–31.

<sup>26</sup> J. S. Taylor, *Poverty migration and settlement in the industrial revolution: sojourners' narratives* (Palo Alto, SPSS, 1989), and G. Taylor, *The problem of poverty 1660–1834* (London, Longman, 1969), pp. 85–9 also R.G. Cowherd, 'The humanitarian reform of the English poor laws from 1782–1815', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 104 (1960) 328–42.

In addition, historians now utilise quantitative methods to test the once accepted view that poor law allowances before 1834 lowered wages and increased population size, and have concluded that allowances should be seen as a reaction to, rather than a cause of, these phenomena.<sup>27</sup> In his research Blaug has estimated that the outdoor relief scale did not allow workers to depend on parish relief without working, so paupers did have an incentive to find work. McCloskey also refuted the claim that outdoor relief eroded wage rates.<sup>28</sup> Baugh and Taylor have shown that most overseers monitored the granting of relief closely to avoid abuse of the system. In addition, Baugh's research on the counties of Essex, Sussex and Kent demonstrates that relief expenditure fluctuated, that relief policies varied in line with unemployment levels and that the provision of short-term outdoor relief was more cost effective than providing long-term indoor relief. He also found that there was little difference "between Speenhamland and non-Speenhamland districts in the amount *per capita* spending changed" from 1814 to 1823.<sup>29</sup>

Historians have also considered the regional variations in *per capita* relief expenditure. Blaug recognised seasonal fluctuations in the demand for labour and identified the relatively high levels of relief expenditure in the southern grain-producing areas of the south-east, especially in winter months, because of seasonality in the demand for agricultural labour and the fact that most agricultural labourers were hired on a weekly or daily basis. He, along with Digby, identified a decline of cottage industry after 1800 in the south-east and recognised that the southern agricultural labourer was relatively immobile.<sup>30</sup> Blaug was one of the first historians to make extensive use of the 1832 Rural Queries to provide empirical support for his analysis. Boyer considered the adoption and persistence of outdoor relief and also used data for 311 rural southern parishes obtained

<sup>27</sup> Blaug, 'The myth' 151–84, and J.P. Huzel, 'Malthus the poor law and population in early nineteenth century England', *Economic History Review*, 22 (1969) 430–52 also S. Williams, 'Earnings, poor relief and the economy of makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the early years of the new poor law', *Rural History*, 16 (2005) 21–52.

<sup>28</sup> D.N. McCloskey, 'New perspectives on the old poor law', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10 (1973) 419–36.

<sup>29</sup> Baugh, 'The cost', 63.

<sup>30</sup> Blaug, 'The myth', 151–84, and A. Digby., 'The labour market and the continuity of social policy after 1834: the case of the eastern counties', *The Economic History Review*, 28 (1975) 70.

from the Rural Queries, and concluded that the figures “yield a view of the poor law radically different from the traditional view.”<sup>31</sup> He observed that the system of outdoor relief was consciously developed by grain farmers as an inexpensive method to provide income for seasonally unemployed labourers.<sup>32</sup> Digby’s analysis of the pre-1834 poor law stressed the role played by the labour-hiring farmers in the administration of outdoor relief.<sup>33</sup> Blaug, Baugh, Digby and Snell examined in detail the life of the labouring poor in southern England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and showed the importance of outdoor relief for the labouring poor, especially at times of seasonal unemployment.<sup>34</sup> Digby and Hobsbawm and Rudé also noted that in the period around 1830 underemployment was constant except during harvest and particularly high in winter months, so outdoor relief bills were higher for parishes at this time.<sup>35</sup>

Blaug discovered a large variety of outdoor relief practices used by parishes, and Boyer clearly identified six methods used by rural parishes to relieve the able-bodied poor.<sup>36</sup> These were: allowances in aid of wages; payments to the seasonally unemployed agricultural labourer; the use of the labour rate; the roundsman system; the provision of workhouses; and payments to labourers with large families.<sup>37</sup> There is an area of debate over the payment of child allowance in relation to outdoor relief. The traditional view was that outdoor relief was linked to the size of families, encouraging labourers to have large numbers of children. This view has been challenged. Both Blaug and Huzel used parish data and did not find that the payment of child allowance had a significant effect on raising

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<sup>31</sup> G. Boyer, ‘The economic role of the English poor Law c.1780–1834’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1982), p.10.

<sup>32</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, p.268.

<sup>33</sup> A. Digby, *Pauper palaces* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul), pp.6–7.

<sup>34</sup> Blaug, ‘The myth’, and Baugh, ‘The cost’, and A. Digby, *The poor law in nineteenth-century England* (London, The Chameleon Press, 1982), also Snell, *Annals*.

<sup>35</sup> E. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, Readers Union Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), p.74, and A. Digby, *Pauper palaces* (London, Routledge, 1978), pp. 22–3.

<sup>36</sup> Blaug, ‘The myth’, 229–45.

<sup>37</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, pp. 10–11.

the birth rate.<sup>38</sup> Not all historians agree; for example Boyer believes the use of child allowances did cause birth rates to increase.<sup>39</sup>

### *The provision for indoor relief*

A national survey of the poor law for the year 1802/3 revealed 3,765 workhouses. The Webbs' believed that this figure had risen to 4,000 by 1815, with a resident pauper population of 100,000.<sup>40</sup> By 1831 there were almost 4,800 institutions, and while the number fell under the new poor law, workhouses became progressively larger and more grandly constructed. Some historians have concentrated their research on the granting of indoor relief, the workhouse and its inmates. A number of individual parishes possessed a workhouse that served "both as almshouses for the impotent and corrective establishment for the able-bodied."<sup>41</sup> The poor law commissioners exaggerated the horrors of the unregulated poorhouses and the Webbs' derisory comments on the pre-1834 workhouses followed this thinking. They commented that "the overcrowding, insanitation, filth and gross indecency of workhouse life during the whole of the eighteenth and even for the first thirty or forty years of the nineteenth century are simply indescribable."<sup>42</sup> Blaug also believed that magistrates were frequently reluctant to send paupers to workhouses because they were "invariably an unsanitary and disorderly institution, herding together the young, the old, the sick, and the insane" and thought that this helped to account for the heavy reliance on outdoor relief.<sup>43</sup>

The few studies that have addressed the issue of indoor relief pre-1834 are mostly unpublished dissertations and journal articles so there is scope for more research on this

<sup>38</sup> Blaug, 'The myth', 173–8 and Huzel 'The demographic', 369–81.

<sup>39</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, pp.150–71.

<sup>40</sup> J.S. Taylor, 'The unreformed workhouse 1776–1834' in E.W. Martin (ed), *Comparative development in social welfare* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1972), pp. 62–3.

<sup>41</sup> P. Wood, *Poverty and the workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, Alan Sutton Publishing, 1991), p. 54.

<sup>42</sup> Webb and Webb, *English poor part 1*, p.248.

<sup>43</sup> Blaug, 'The myth', 157.

subject.<sup>44</sup> From his work on Devon, Taylor disputes the view that workhouses were “invariably” unsanitary and disorderly institutions.<sup>45</sup> He analysed parliamentary returns of 1776 and 1803 to gain some understanding of the number of inmates in workhouses and suggests that the Webbs’ charge of overcrowding in workhouses needs qualification; “overcrowding was certainly critical in some workhouses but not in others.”<sup>46</sup> He has also recognised that the growing popularity of outdoor relief before 1834 may not have been due to the failure of workhouses to cope with relieving increasing numbers but “because workhouses were not expected to cope with the type of poverty occasioning more extensive outdoor relief.”<sup>47</sup> Secondly, parish officials recognised that it was less expensive to give intermittent outdoor relief to the needy than to maintain the poor in workhouses. In fact, *per capita* costs of indoor relief, as given in the 1802 returns, were almost four times higher than for outdoor relief.<sup>48</sup> Taylor believes that the Webbs’ damning indictment of the unreformed workhouse needs revision as it did “for all of its inadequacies, fulfil a social need and may have done so much better than has hitherto been suspected.”<sup>49</sup> As most recent research has concentrated on the history of the workhouse post-1834, an evaluation of pre-1834 workhouses using local sources did not begin until the 1970s.<sup>50</sup>

### *The voice of the poor*

As a result of the growing prominence of social history in the last twenty-five years, historians have shown greater interest in the experiences of the poor rather than

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<sup>44</sup> T. Hitchcock, ‘The English workhouse: a study in institutional poor relief in selected counties 1696 – 1750’ (unpublished D.Phil. thesis University of Oxford, 1985), and Thomas, ‘The treatment of poverty’.

<sup>45</sup> J.S. Taylor, ‘The mythology of the old poor law’, *The Journal of Economic History*, 29 (1969), 294.

<sup>46</sup> Taylor, ‘The unreformed’ p.62.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.62.

<sup>48</sup> Taylor, ‘The mythology’, 294.

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, ‘The unreformed’, p.74.

<sup>50</sup> M.A. Crowther, *The workhouse system: the history of an English social institution* (London, Methuen, 1981), and Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, and F. Driver, *Power and pauperism the workhouse system 1834–1884* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), and N. Longmate, *The workhouse* (London, Pimlico, 2003), chapter 2 and 3 deals briefly unreformed workhouse pp.23–47 also Wood, *Poverty*.

government policy alone.<sup>51</sup> Keith Snell has stressed that “to define a broader and more realistic range of priorities we must examine the records left by the poor themselves.”<sup>52</sup> Settlement examinations and certificates are a very rich source, as the Settlement Act of 1662 had a direct bearing on the local relief system. The laws were very complicated and Snell, Landau and Wells have debated the significance of the trends in examinations and removals. In particular, discussion has focused on whether examination and removal were essentially a precaution to protect communal property or whether examination was simply an attempt to obtain an acknowledgement of liability from the parish of settlement.<sup>53</sup> However, few parishes followed any consistent policy on settlement and removal, generally turning to settlement laws when worries over spiralling costs called for radical action.<sup>54</sup>

Historians including Snell, Erickson, Richards and Vance have used immigrant letters and their personal testimonies to gain a glimpse into the lives of the poor.<sup>55</sup> Others have also examined pauper letters requesting relief.<sup>56</sup> Sokoll, for example, has used the Essex

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<sup>51</sup> J. Burnett, *Useful toil; autobiographies of working people from the 1820s to 1920s* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977), and J. Burnett, *Destiny obscure autobiographies of childhood education and family from 1820s to 1920s* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1982).

<sup>52</sup> Snell, *Annals*, p.9.

<sup>53</sup> N. Landau, 'The laws of settlement and surveillance of immigration in eighteenth century Kent', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988) 391–20, and 'The regulation of immigration economic structures and definitions of the poor in eighteenth century England', *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990) 541–72, and 'The eighteenth century context of the laws of settlement', *Continuity and Change*, 6 (1991) 417–39, and Snell, *Annals*, and 'Pauper settlement and the right to poor relief in England and Wales', *Continuity and Change*, 6 (1991) 375–415 also R. Wells, 'Migration and the law and parochial policy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century southern England', *Southern History*, 15 (1993) 86–137.

<sup>54</sup> J. Ely, 'The eighteenth century poor laws in the west riding of Yorkshire', *American Journal of Legal History*, 30 (1986) 1–24.

<sup>55</sup> C. Erickson, *Invisible immigrants: the adaptation of English and Scottish immigrants in nineteenth century America* (Ithaca New York, Cornell University Press, 1990), and *Leaving England: Essays on British emigration in the nineteenth century* (Ithaca New York, Cornell University Press, 1994), and Snell, *Annals*, also M. Vance, 'Advancement Moral Worth and Freedom' in N.C. Landsman(ed), *Nation and province in the first British Empire*, (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 2001), pp.151–80, and J. Hill, 'The Dorking emigration scheme of 1832', *Family and Community History*, 7 (2004) 115–28, and G. Howells, "'For I was tired of England sir': English pauper emigrant strategies 1834–60", *Social History*, 23 (1998) 181–94.

<sup>56</sup> D.T. Andrew, 'To the charitable and humane: Appeals for assistance in the eighteenth century London' in H. Cunningham and J. Innes (eds), *Charity Philanthropy and Reform* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998), and J.S. Taylor, (1997) 'Voices in the crowd; the Kirby Lonsdale Township Letters 1809–1836' in T. Hitchcock P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling poverty the voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan), pp.111–12, and T. Sokoll (1997) 'Old age in poverty: the record of Essex pauper letters 1780–1834' in T. Hitchcock P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling poverty the voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan), pp.127–54, also S. King, T. Nutt and A. Tomkins (eds), *Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Britain 1 Voices of the poor: poor law depositions and letters* (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2006).

letters to provide a first-hand record of the living conditions and experiences of ordinary people, and although they were used to a certain extent by Hampson and Tate, it is Sokoll who has clearly shown their importance for the social historian.<sup>57</sup> Tomkins and King have commented that the recent use of pauper letters “is one of the most refreshing developments in the history of welfare of the 1990s,” although they have pointed out that the letters should not be read as a “comprehensive schema into which all narrative voices fit.”<sup>58</sup> Recently, King has also focused on the administration of out-parish relief systems and has used the overseers’ correspondence and additional pauper letters to explore how allowances were paid by parishes.<sup>59</sup>

Another area of research focuses on the strategies used by the poor to survive. In *Customs in Common* E. P. Thompson addressed the issue of the “rights” of the poor and developed the concept of the moral economy.<sup>60</sup> Hitchcock, King and Sharpe in their book *Chronicling Poverty* have also focused their attention on the lives and strategies used by the poor in the eighteenth century to survive.<sup>61</sup> The sources they have used are the various forms of written evidence created when the poor “were confronted by the hierarchies and institutions of authority they were forced to deal with.”<sup>62</sup> For example, sources, which they referred to as the “words” of the poor, include bastardy and settlement examinations, court depositions, letters written by paupers to overseers, entries in vestry minute books and pauper inventories. Hollen Lees also stressed the need to consider the poor laws in the local context where “face-to-face negotiations

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<sup>57</sup> T. Sokoll (1997) ‘Old age in poverty: the record of Essex pauper letters 1780–1834’ in T. Hitchcock P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling poverty the voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan), pp.127–54, and ‘Essex pauper letters’, and E. Hampson, *Treatment of poverty in Cambridgeshire 1597–1834* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1934), also W. Tate, *The Parish chest a study of the records of parochial administration in England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969 reprint).

<sup>58</sup> A. Tomkins and S. King (eds), ‘Introduction’ in A. Tomkins and S. King (eds), *The poor in England 1700–1850 An economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003) pp.6–7.

<sup>59</sup> S. King, “‘It is impossible for our vestry to judge his case into perfection from here’ Managing the distance dimensions of poor relief 1800–40”, *Rural History*, 16 (2005) 161–189.

<sup>60</sup> E. P. Thompson, *Customs in common* (London, Penguin, 1993).

<sup>61</sup> Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, *Chronicling poverty*.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4

determined their impact.<sup>63</sup> Some historians have adopted the French experience of marginality and have used the phrase the “economy of makeshifts” to represent all the methods and strategies used by the poor to survive when in financial difficulty.<sup>64</sup> Note, however, that many of the poor living in the parish negotiated the nature of their relief with parish officers verbally, and these conversations are not recorded. French and Barry have considered the autonomy of the individual within society. They have looked at the relationship “between identities and the social norms that shaped the possibilities of self-presentation or acted to constrain those possibilities.”<sup>65</sup> Hindle, and Peter King have examined the role of the poor laws in shaping identity and have shown that the poor adopted many strategies to cope with the “fragility and sparseness of their material world.”<sup>66</sup>

Twenty years ago Snell traced the decline of the economy of makeshifts in the south of England in the late eighteenth century, citing a number of reasons, including the increase in enclosures.<sup>67</sup> Further work has been done on this decline by Horrell and Humphries, and Williams, who examined household budgets and have shown how important poor law provision was.<sup>68</sup> King and Tomkins have recently published the first collection of research focusing on the numerous makeshifts employed by the labouring poor to help them to survive. They included day labour, casual jobs, the use of common rights to keep a cow

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<sup>63</sup> L. Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers the English poor laws and the people 1700–1948* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> O.H. Hufton, *The poor of eighteenth-century France 1750–1789* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1974), and Tomkins and King, *The poor*, and J. Innes, ‘The “mixed economy of welfare” in early modern England: assessments of the options from Hale to Malthus’ in M. Daunton (ed), *Charity self-interest and welfare in the English past* (London, UCL Press, 1996), also R. Wall, ‘Work welfare and the family: an illustration of the adaptive family economy’ in L. Bonfield, R. Smith and K. Wrigthson (eds), *The world we have gained* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>65</sup> H. French and J. Barry, ‘Introduction’, in H. French and J. Barry (eds), *Identity and agency in England, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan), pp.1–33  
2004

<sup>66</sup> S. Hindle, ‘Civility, honesty and the identification of the deserving poor in seventeenth-century England in French and Barry (eds), *Identity and agency*, pp. 38–59, and P. King, ‘Social inequality, identity and the labouring poor in eighteenth-century England in French and Barry (eds), *Identity and agency*, pp.60–86.

<sup>67</sup> Snell, *Annals*, pp.138–227.

<sup>68</sup> J. Humphries and S. Horrell, ‘Old questions new data and alternative perspectives: families’ living standards in the industrial revolution’, *Journal of Economic History*, 52 (1992) 849–90, and S. Williams, ‘Earnings, poor relief and the economy of makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the early years of the new poor law’, *Rural History*, 16 (2005) 21–52 and ‘Poor relief, labourers’ households and living standards in rural England c.1770–1834: a Bedfordshire case study’, *Economic History Review*, 58 (2005) 485–519.



or pig, and gleaning. These ploys are linked with the demands that the poor made on the poor relief system, for the provision of clothing, food and shoes and also the part played by local charity in enabling the poor to survive.<sup>69</sup> Horrell and Humphries have also stressed the importance of women and children in the makeshift economy.<sup>70</sup> It is extremely difficult to quantify in monetary terms the value of this makeshift activity, but recently historians have tried to estimate the annual value of some of these enterprises.<sup>71</sup> Verdon has used the 1834 Poor Law Report to show the types of rural work women and children were engaged in and the value to the family economy of their earnings.<sup>72</sup> Peter King has pointed out the material benefits that the rural poor gained by their access to customary rights, especially the practice of gleaning.<sup>73</sup> Burchardt has also researched the increase in allotment provision for industrious labourers that enabled labourers to gain a certain independence by growing their own food and keeping some livestock.<sup>74</sup> Research on the economy of makeshifts provides insights into the scale of poverty and Steven King has also shown the increasing importance in southern England of poor relief when the economy of makeshifts weakened.<sup>75</sup>

### *Charity*

In the last twenty years the importance of charity has been recognised by historians as an integral part of the benefit system. Finlayson called the moving frontier of welfare the interaction between the state, voluntarism, market and family in providing for the social

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<sup>69</sup> Tomkins and King (eds), *The poor*. p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Women's labour force participation and the transition to the male –breadwinner family 1790 –1865', *Economic History Review*, 38 (1995) 89–117, and J. Humphries, (1998) 'Female-headed households in early industrial Britain: The vanguard of the proletariat?' *Labour History Review*, 63 (1998) 31– 65, also J. Humphries, 'Enclosures common rights and women: the proletarianisation of families in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Journal of Economic History*, 50 (1990) 17–42.

<sup>71</sup> P. King, 'Customary rights and women's earnings: the importance of gleaning to the rural poor 1750–1850', *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991) 461–76, and Humphries, 'Enclosures common rights', 17–42.

<sup>72</sup> N. Verdon, 'The rural labour market in the early nineteenth century: women's and children's employment, family income, and the 1834 poor law report', *Economic History Review*, 55 (2002) 299–322, and *Rural women workers in nineteenth century England gender, work and wages* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2002).

<sup>73</sup> King, 'Customary rights', 461–76.

<sup>74</sup> J. Burchardt, *The allotment movement in England 1793–1873* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2002).

<sup>75</sup> King, *Poverty* Chapters 6 and 7.

needs of the poor.<sup>76</sup> Current research, seeking to measure the value of charity to the poor, is being undertaken from a very different perspective from the traditional one, which produced many detailed studies concerned with the histories of pre-1834 charitable institutions. These histories of the charitable institutions did not address the issue of the strategies used by the poor who relied on these bodies.<sup>77</sup> Daunton and Broad have emphasised the importance of parochial charity funds and the efficient, flexible manner in which they were used.<sup>78</sup> Gorsky's research on philanthropy in Bristol also demonstrated this point.<sup>79</sup>

By utilising all these local sources, historians are able to look at a wider range of topics even if they concentrate their research on certain aspects of poor relief and on particular issues or sections of society. For example, women, children and the elderly have recently been the subject of separate research.<sup>80</sup> Historians have identified crisis points for individuals at various points in the life cycle, for example, for families with young children; widowhood; sickness and old age.<sup>81</sup> Other areas of specialised work deal with particular aspects of relief such as education, assisted immigration, lunacy, vagrancy and medical care.<sup>82</sup> For example, Stringer has observed that parish authorities used a range

<sup>76</sup> G. Finlayson, 'A moving frontier: voluntarism and the state in Bristol social welfare 1911–1949' *Twentieth Century British History* 1 (1990) 183–206.

<sup>77</sup> P. Mandler (ed), *The uses of charity: The poor on relief in the nineteenth century metropolis* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), and D. Fraser (ed), *The new poor law in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1976), also M. Gorsky, (1999) *Patterns of philanthropy charity and society in nineteenth-century Bristol* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1999).

<sup>78</sup> M. Daunton (ed), *Charity self-interest, and welfare in the English past* (London, UCL Press, 1996), and J. Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare 1650–1834', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999).

<sup>79</sup> Gorsky, *Patterns of philanthropy*.

<sup>80</sup> M. Barker-Read, 'The treatment of the aged poor in five selected west Kent parishes from settlement to Speenhamland 1662–1797' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Open University, 1988), and R. Connors, 'Poor women the parish and the politics of poverty' in H. Barker and E. Chalus (ed), *Gender in eighteenth century England: Roles representations and responsibilities* (London, Longman, 1997), pp.126–47, and L. Botelho, 'Aged and impotent: Parish relief of the aged poor in early modern Suffolk', in Daunton (ed), *Charity self-interest*, pp.91–112, and R. Adair and R. Smith, 'Ageing and well-being in early modern England pension trends and gender preferences under the English old poor law 1650–1800', in P. Johnson and P. Thane (eds), *Old age from antiquity to post modernity* (London, Routledge, 1998), pp.64–95, also N. Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender in nineteenth-century England: the case of Hertfordshire', 20 (2005) 351–84.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> E. G. Thomas, 'The old poor law and medicine', *Medical History*, 24 (1980) 1–19, and A. Tomkins, 'Paupers and the infirmary in mid-eighteenth century Shrewsbury', *Midland History*, 43 (1999) 208–27, and M.E. Fissell, 'The sick and drooping poor in eighteenth century Bristol and its region', *Social History of Medicine*, 2 (1989) 49–81, and S. Williams, 'Poor relief welfare and medical provision in Bedfordshire: The social economic and demographic context c1770–1834' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999), and 'Practitioners income and provision for the poor: Parish

of “formal and informal medical practitioners to improve the lot of the sick poor.”<sup>83</sup> Thomas has shown that, generally speaking, the parish authorities were sympathetic and generous in their provision for medical care: “the account books often reveal genuine humanitarian understanding of local needs.”<sup>84</sup> All this research is valuable and opens up a further dimension to understanding poverty from the bottom up.

### *Life-cycle poverty*

For nearly a century, some historians have recognised that rural poverty had a particular life-cycle, and in the last twenty years historians have focused on this concept.<sup>85</sup> Stapleton has examined life-cycle poverty in rural Hampshire, while King’s work on Calverley and Ottoway and Williams have stressed the necessity of studying individuals over a full life-cycle.<sup>86</sup> This has contributed to the historians’ understanding of the broad welfare function of the old poor law, which provided relief payments in many forms, including payments of food, rent, clothes, shoes, medical aid and burial costs.<sup>87</sup>

Work has been completed which uses nominal record linkage to answer questions about the lives of the poor (examining such records as parish registers, local poor law documents and testamentary evidence). Wrigley adopted the method of family reconstitution by nominal linkage for the Colyton parish registers, and Macfarlane used

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doctors in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’, *Social History of Medicine*, 18 (2005) 159–86, and S. King, “Stop this overwhelming torment of destiny”: negotiating financial aid at times of sickness under the English old poor law, 1800–1840’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79, (2005) 228–60, and ‘Regional patterns in the experiences and treatment of the sick poor, 1800–40: rights, obligations and duties in the rhetoric of paupers’, *Family and Community History*, 10 (2007) 61–76, and A. Stringer, (2006) ‘Depth and diversity in parochial healthcare Northamptonshire 1750–1830’, *Family and Community History*, 9 (2006), and Hill, ‘The Dorking emigration’, and Howells, “For I was tired”, also A. Eccles, ‘Vagrancy in later eighteenth century Westmorland: a social profile’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 189 (1989) 249–62.

<sup>83</sup> Stringer, ‘Depth and diversity’, 43.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, ‘The old poor’, 3.

<sup>85</sup> Marshall, *The English poor*, and Snell, *Annals*, also T. Wales, ‘Poverty poor relief and life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth century Norfolk’ in R.M. Smith (ed), *Land kinship and life cycle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.351–404.

<sup>86</sup> B. Stapleton, ‘Inherited poverty and life-cycle poverty: Odiham Hampshire’, *Social History*, 18 (1993) 339–355, and S. King, ‘Reconstructing lives: the poor the poor Law and welfare in Calverley 1650–1820’, *Social History*, 22 (1997) 318 – 38, and S. Ottoway and S. Williams, ‘Reconstructing the life-cycle experience of poverty in the time of the old poor law’, *Archives*, 23 (1998) also King, *Poverty*, pp.120–37.

<sup>87</sup> Wales, ‘Poverty poor’, pp.351–404.

“total reconstitution” for his work on Earls Colne in Essex. The latter incorporated historical data into the nominal linkage process by joining together all parish records, rather than merely using the parish registers of baptism, marriage and burial.<sup>88</sup> Most of these family reconstitutions have been used for demographic analysis rather than linking them to other data available in the parishes.<sup>89</sup> Sokoll has produced a detailed study of pauper households in Ardleigh by linking pauper lists and listings of inhabitants, as well as overseers’ accounts.<sup>90</sup> The results clearly demonstrate that this is a useful way to approach the investigation of the family and household.

### *Ratepayers and the provision for poor relief*

Completed research has also considered the question of what role the community (via the poor laws) should and did play in relieving those in need. This was a source of much contemporary debate.<sup>91</sup> In the context of local studies it is important to consider the legal and administrative framework alongside the institutional histories and individual experiences. England had a rate-based system for funding relief and King has pointed out that the net distribution of resources towards the poor at a parish level should be considered in relation to the “depth of the pockets of ratepayers”. In *Poverty and Welfare* he stresses, “in any year the “supply” of welfare in the form of the maximum yield of the parish poor rate was something that had to be negotiated between ratepayers and the parish.”<sup>92</sup> Song has argued that the focus of research has seldom been on landowners in relation to “the significance of the local government machinery, which was primarily in

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<sup>88</sup> E. A. Wrigley, ‘Some problems of family reconstitution using English parish register material: the example of Colyton Area’, *Population Studies*, 31 (1977) 281–312, and A. Macfarlane S. Harrison and C. Jardine, *Reconstructing historical communities* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>89</sup> E. A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, J.E. Oeppen and R.S. Schofield, *English population history from family reconstitution 1580 - 1837* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>90</sup> T. Sokoll, *Household and family among the poor: the case of two Essex communities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries* (Bochum: Brockmeyer 1993), 59–74.

<sup>91</sup> Lord Kames, *Sketches of the history of man* (Edinburgh, 1774), and J. Townsend *dissertation on the poor laws/by a well wisher to mankind 1786* (London, W. Flint, 1817), also Malthus, *Principle of population*

<sup>92</sup> S. King, ‘Poor relief and English economic development reappraised’, *The Economic History Review*, 50 (1997) 363, and S. King, *Poverty* p. 90.

their hands.”<sup>93</sup> Further work in this field would complement the extensive research that has already been done “from below”. This is particularly relevant to the south of England, especially after 1815 when attempts to raise the rates was often met with ratepayer protests and refusal to pay increased rates. Recently Wells has examined the role of general and select vestries and has identified a hardening of attitude among members of the select vestries, resistant to paying for increasing poor relief. Wells views the setting up of select vestries after 1819 as a desire to restore the “traditional upper-class hegemony over vestries from their current supposed usurpation by lesser ratepayers, whose populist generosity towards claimants underpinned present maladministration.”<sup>94</sup> The role of the select vestry and its influence, if any, on the location of the Swing riots in parishes is a neglected area of research.

### *The Swing Riots*

This study also considers the Swing Riots of 1830–32, a rising that took place against the background of the increasing pauperisation of the labourers in south-eastern England. The Hammonds discussed the Swing riots, but they used none of the local archival material.<sup>95</sup> In 1963 E. P. Thompson added to the research, and a small number of county studies have been produced.<sup>96</sup> Hobsbawm and Rudé researched the outbreaks of unrest in the context of the economic and social development of the labourers’ living standard and they viewed the situation as the “English farm-labourers’ long and doomed struggle against poverty and degradation.”<sup>97</sup> Since the publication of their work there have been a number of studies that have researched localised unrest post-1815. Recent

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<sup>93</sup> B. K. Song, ‘Landed interest, local government and the labour market in England 1750–1850’, *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998) 466.

<sup>94</sup> R. Wells, ‘Poor-Law reform in the rural south-east: the impact of the ‘Sturges- Bourne Acts’ during the agricultural depression 1815–1835’, *Southern History*, 23 (2001) 56.

<sup>95</sup> Hammond and Hammond, *The village labourer* pp.240–324.

<sup>96</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, Penguin, 1963), pp. 249–53 and 257–8. and A.M. Colsons, ‘The revolt of the Hampshire agricultural labourers and its causes 1812-1831’ (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of London, 1937), also N. Gash, ‘The rural unrest in England in 1830’ (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, University Oxford, 1934).

<sup>97</sup> Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.15.

research by the FACHRS team has identified 3,283 incidents of Swing disturbances compared to the 1,475 identified by Hobsbawm and Rudé.<sup>98</sup> At the same time, many studies on poverty and the poor law do not consider the riots or, if they do so, only discuss them briefly.<sup>99</sup> As Jones has commented, to date, little account has been taken of “the social and cultural backdrop to the disturbances.”<sup>100</sup> Considering the extent of the riots is important in a regional study, and the riots are considered in the context of poor law provision and the increasing hardship experienced by the poor at the time.

### *Conclusion*

Historians now recognise that as a result of the significant change of focus in research on the poor law they have to consider the many variations in poor relief administered at the local level. This questions the validity of looking at the history of poor law from the traditional standpoint of national legislation. In addition, historians are now researching the experience of individual paupers, “history from below”, together with the study of poor relief in the economic, social and political context in which the poor law was locally administered. The wealth of information available on the poor law in local archives is now being utilised and, as more and more work is completed locally, a more comprehensive picture is evolving of the complex subject of how the poor laws were administered in relation to the localities and national policy.

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<sup>98</sup> A. Charlesworth, *A social protest in a rural society: the spatial diffusion of the Captain Swing disturbances 1830 to 1831* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1979), and A. Charlesworth (ed), *An atlas of rural protest in Britain 1548 – 1900* (London, Croom Helm, 1983), and J.P.D. Dunbabin (ed), *Rural discontent in nineteenth century Britain* (New York, Homes and Meier, 1974), and M. Holland(ed), *Swing unmasked the agricultural riots of 1830 to 1832 and their wider implications* (Milton Keynes, FACHRS Publications, 2005), and P.D. Jones, ‘Captain Swing and rural popular consciousness: nineteenth-century southern English social history in context’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton, 2002), and B. Reay, *The last rising of the agricultural labourers: rural life and protest in nineteenth century England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990), also R. Wells, ‘Rural rebels in southern England in the 1830s’ in C. Emsley and J. Walvin (ed), *Artisans peasants and proletarians 1760–1860* (London, Croom Helm, 1985).

<sup>99</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.229

<sup>100</sup> P.D. Jones, ‘Captain Swing and rural popular consciousness: nineteenth-century southern English social history in context’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton, 2002), p. 2.

## Chapter Two

### Surrey

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Surrey is bounded on the east by Kent, on the west by Berkshire and Hampshire and on the north by Middlesex. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the county was divided into thirteen hundreds. There were six boroughs, namely Bletchingley, Gatton, Guildford, Haslemere, Reigate and Southwark, comprising 140 parishes and 449 villages or hamlets. Its eight market towns comprised Chertsey, Croydon, Dorking, Epsom, Farnham, Kingston, Woking and Ewell but by the beginning of the nineteenth century the Woking and Ewell markets had been discontinued. Surrey was represented in Parliament by six borough and two county seats.

#### *Topography of Surrey*

In 1815 rural Surrey was mainly agricultural with varied farming regimes, which reflected the wide range of soils: clay, loam, heath, chalk and gravel (see Map 2.1). In terms of prevailing soils and produce, James and Malcolm observed that “Surrey has not an entire district within its outlines” and that the make-up of the soil was so varied that agricultural practice was “exceeding diversified.”<sup>1</sup> Evershed noted that “it would be impossible to find any very extensive tract of land of any uniform character.”<sup>2</sup> Cobbett described Surrey as having “some of the very best and some of the worst lands, not only in England but in the world.”<sup>3</sup>

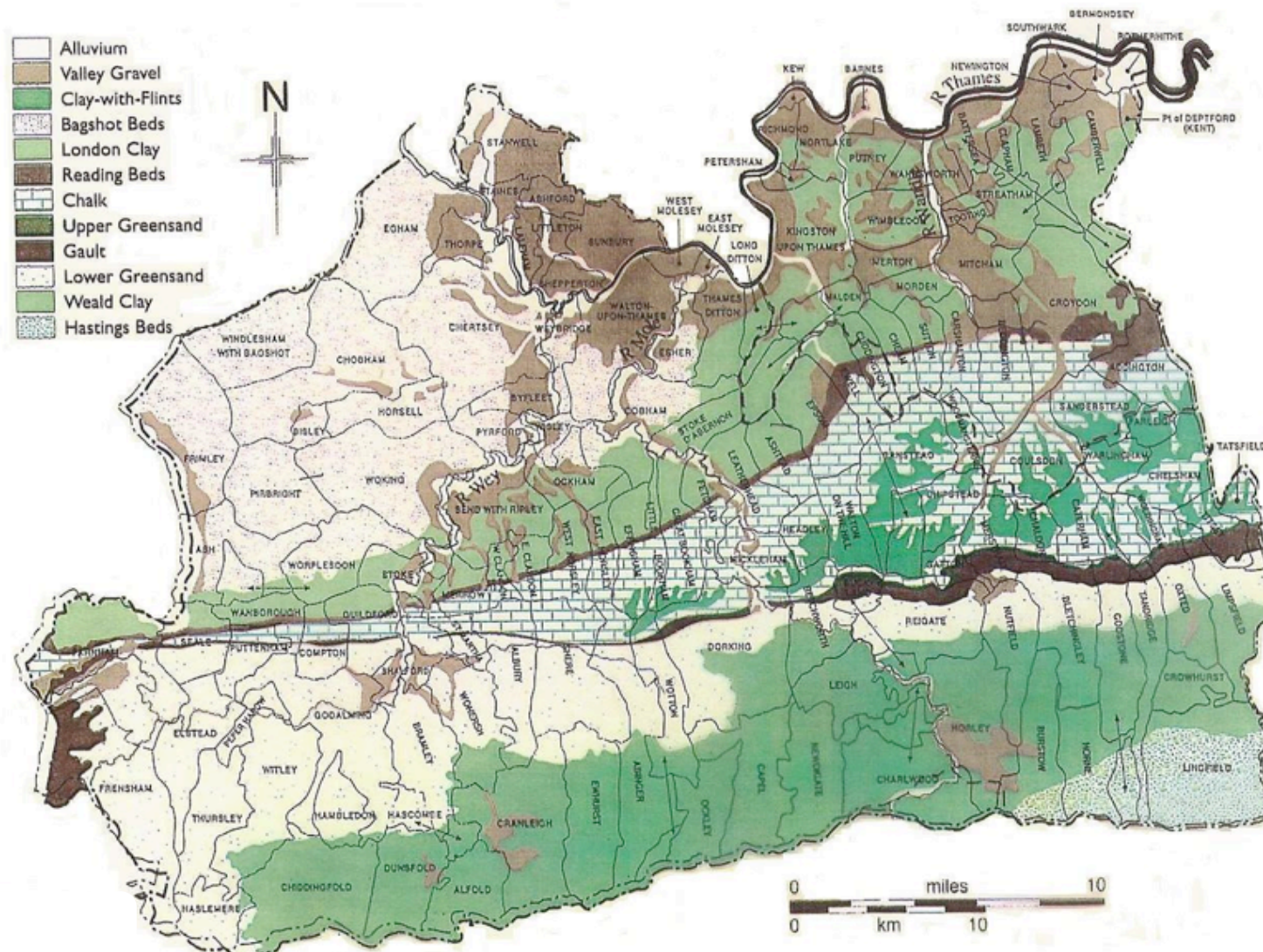
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<sup>1</sup> W. James and J. Malcolm, *A general view of the agriculture* (London, Thomas Wilson and Sons, 1794), p.353. and H. E. Malden, *The Victoria county history of Surrey* 4 (London, Dawson, 1967 reprint), p.455.

<sup>2</sup> H. Evershed, ‘On the farming of Surrey’, *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, 14 (1853) 400.

<sup>3</sup> W. Cobbett, *Rural rides* (London, Penguin Books, 1985 reprint), p.33.

**Map 2.9 - Topography of Surrey**





Stevenson in his survey also commented that the great variety of “soils and elevations” in the county made it impossible to make any observations on the prevailing rotation of crops, and “there is no great breadths of land where an uniform system is carried on.”<sup>4</sup> The only area with large tracts of “land of a tolerably uniform character” was the Surrey weald, an extensive area of heavy clay.<sup>5</sup> It lay on the southern side of the county, stretching from Haslemere on the west to Lingfield on the border with Sussex. The land situated on the lower greensand above the weald on the east of the county near Godstone and Tandridge and westward towards Farnham and Frensham had soil that was light and easy to work. To the north lay a narrow strip of “blackland” on the gault clay, extending from Titsey, Woldingham and Caterham towards Farnham and then a band of upper greensand, especially prevalent in the east of the county. The chalk hills of the North Downs, spanning the county from Farnham to the borders of Kent, came next in line. They narrowed to the west along the Hogsback with a smaller ridge of hills, extending from Richmond to Wimbledon and south of Dorking. The summit of the downs and the southern escarpment comprised poor quality clay with flint soil, but on the northern slope, where the clay intermixed with chalk, the ground, according to Malden, provided some of the finest arable land in the county.<sup>6</sup> To the north lay a strip of light sandy loam known as the Reading beds, while the western part of the county was dominated by the Bagshot sands, an area of barren heathlands. To the east of the county lay the London clays and this clay was of superior quality to the wealden clay and was suitable for wheat, peas and beans. Valuable land across the county was found in the gravel-rich alluvial soil, especially along the valleys of the Thames, the Mole, the Wey and Wandle.

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<sup>4</sup> W. Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Surrey drawn up for the consideration of the Board of Agriculture* (London, Sherwood Neely and Jones, 1813), p.178. and Evershed, ‘On the farming’, 424.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

<sup>6</sup> Malden, *The Victoria county*, p.455.

*Agriculture in Surrey*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century approximately one-sixth of the county comprised heaths or wastelands which were unsuitable for farming. In the Bagshot area large heaths dominated the countryside and the soil quality was particularly inferior on those heaths in Chobham, Bagshot and Pirbright. This land was, from an agricultural standpoint “valueless” but for poor labourers they were important supplies of turf.<sup>7</sup> In addition they could obtain peat in the swampy areas of Bagshot.

The weald contained extensive woodlands. Cobbett, commenting on the view from Hascomb outside Godalming, wrote that “southward are the wealds of Surrey and Sussex with all their fine and innumerable oaks.”<sup>8</sup> Charlwood was an extensive parish in the Weald with suitable land for growing excellent oak trees but difficult for tillage, and farms in the parish were let at low rents.<sup>9</sup> Other wealden parishes such as Chiddingfold and Dunsfold in the east and Newdigate and Capel further west had extensive woodlands.<sup>10</sup>

Up to the end of the Napoleonic wars wheat was the leading grain crop in most of southern England, and of the 481,947 statute acres of Surrey, James and Malcolm observed that “arable land far exceeds the proportion of pasture.” Barley and oats were grown but wheat was the predominant crop.<sup>11</sup> Stevenson also considered that the cultivation of wheat in Surrey was more general and extensive than in many other areas of the country. He attributed this to six contributory factors: the rich heavy soil of part of the Weald which was particularly suited to wheat; the need for frequent summer fallowing of the wealden clay which encouraged farmers to sow wheat “in order to pay for the want of

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<sup>7</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.455.

<sup>8</sup> Cobbett, *Rural rides*, p.240.

<sup>9</sup> C. Greenwood and J. Greenwood, *Surrey* (London, C. and J. Greenwood, 1823), p.44.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>11</sup> James and Malcolm, *A general view*, p.353.

a crop;”<sup>12</sup> the introduction of clover ley as a preparatory crop on lighter soils; the added value of good quality grain because of the proximity to London; the cheapness of lime; and the availability of manure from the capital which encouraged farmers to grow wheat.<sup>13</sup> According to the 1801 crop returns for the county, wheat occupied the largest acreage of land in 62% of the parishes and it was second in importance to oats on the heavy wealden and London clays.<sup>14</sup>

One particularly fertile area in the west of the county was the district around Godalming, “situated on rich, well-sheltered sandy loams.”<sup>15</sup> Farmers there were better off than in the weald because they found it easier to diversify into mixed farms, which included orchards, root crops and sheep pasture. Around the market town of Farnham, once the site of one of the country’s greatest wheat markets, the soil was suitable for hop growing. In 1769 Young had commented on the good quality of Farnham hops, a view repeated by the Greenwoods in 1823 when they wrote that the hops from Farnham were “of the best quality and at market fetching the highest prices.”<sup>16</sup>

In much of the Surrey weald farms were let at low rents.<sup>17</sup> The usual wealden landscape consisted of small fields surrounded by narrow bands of woodland known as “shaws”. Lord has shown that by the 1840s over half the holdings on the weald were under owner-occupation and most were smallholdings.<sup>18</sup> The soil and subsoil in winter was cold and retentive of water and in summer months liable to bake and crack. In wet weather the land was unfit for ploughing and when saturated took time to dry out before becoming

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<sup>12</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.202.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.202.

<sup>14</sup> A. G. Parton, ‘The 1801 crop returns for the county of Surrey’, *Surrey Archaeological Society Collections*, 64 (1967) 118.

<sup>15</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.366.

<sup>16</sup> A. Young, *A six week tour through the southern counties of England and Wales* (London, W. Strahan, 1769), p.217, and Greenwood and Greenwood, *Surrey*, p. xvi.

<sup>17</sup> Greenwood and Greenwood, *Surrey*, p.44.

<sup>18</sup> E. Lord, ‘Communities of common interest: the social landscape of south-east Surrey 1750–1850’, in C. Phythian-Adams(ed), *Societies cultures and kinship 1580–1850: cultural provinces and English local history* (London, Leicester University Press, 1996), p.136.

workable agricultural land. Numerous streams rose from the heavy water-logged wealden soil. James and Malcolm remarked on this area as being “clay bottomed, wet, an unpleasant passage of country.”<sup>19</sup> Greenwood also described the weald as possessing soil of an inferior quality, consisting of much arable and of poor quality pasture.<sup>20</sup> As a result, it was difficult and expensive soil to work. Nonetheless, with “large capital and also superior skill, attention and activity to make the most of the proper seasons” it could be drained and cultivated with wheat.<sup>21</sup> But as many of the farmers were smallholders they did not have the necessary capital for improvements.

### *Improved agriculture*

Surrey’s physical characteristics made it difficult for farmers to operate the “most improved systems of agriculture.”<sup>22</sup> Surrey farmers were therefore slow in introducing changes. The heavy acidic soils required expensive draining and suitable dressings in the form of lime, chalk, soot, ashes or straw to make them profitable. On the gault clay it was possible to grow large crops of wheat and beans, but the heavy soil was expensive to plough, often requiring seven or eight horses in the draught.<sup>23</sup> James and Malcolm noted that “every species of bad husbandry is practised: foulness of the land, the want of ability to manure the soil, a poverty of produce.”<sup>24</sup> Little improvement occurred over the subsequent fifty years. In 1853 Evershed commented, “there are no extensive tracts which have been reclaimed or improved by artificial means.”<sup>25</sup> He also noted that large areas of land needed draining for, once undertaken, it would rank “as some of the finest and most productive land in the county.”<sup>26</sup> He referred to the farm buildings throughout Surrey that

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<sup>19</sup> James and Malcolm, *A general view*, p.355.

<sup>20</sup> Greenwood and Greenwood, *Surrey*, p. xii.

<sup>21</sup> T. Allen, *History of the counties of Surrey and Sussex* (London, I.T.Hinton,1829), p.7.

<sup>22</sup> Evershed, ‘On the farming’, p. 395.

<sup>23</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> James and Malcolm, *A general view*, p.79.

<sup>25</sup> Evershed, ‘On the farming’, p. 424.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.399.

were very inferior and “there is still no single locality which does not abound in old fashioned, badly arranged and patch work farm buildings.”<sup>27</sup>

Of course, for agriculture to prosper, farming methods had to modernise, but this was an expensive business. In the agricultural depression of the early nineteenth century many farmers were struggling to survive and were incapable of investing in expensive improvements to the land. Little progress was evident by 1850 when Sir James Caird wrote to Henry Drummond, a Surrey landowner, of the “neglect and mismanagement” that were apparent throughout the county and that the general features of agriculture betrayed “a low scale of intelligence and a small amount of capital and industry.”<sup>28</sup> Of Gomshall he commented that it exhibited “a state of rural management as completely neglected as he was likely to meet in the remotest parts of the island. He will see undrained marshes; ill kept roads; untrimmed hedges; rickety farm buildings; shabby-looking cows of various breeds and dirty cottages.”<sup>29</sup> He commented that “there seems to be great room for improvement in the neighbourhood of Guildford and draining and good farming with better house accommodation for stock would make a wonderful change in the agricultural returns of the valley to the south of the town.”<sup>30</sup> Caird also commented on farming along the Wey valley:

“the style of agriculture is very defective when the quality of the soil and the convenience of the situation are taken into account.... the first appearance of many of the winter fallows, the paltry green crops and the old fashioned plans of ploughing so generally adhered to, indicate a very

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.417.

<sup>28</sup> See R. Sykes, ‘Politics and electoral behaviour in Guildford and West Surrey’ (unpublished Ph.D.thesis,Surrey University, 1977), p.37.

<sup>29</sup> J. Caird, *English agriculture* (London, Cass, 1968 reprint), p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

backward state of husbandry, while the state of the farm roads and farm buildings is in perfect keeping with the implements and the stock.”<sup>31</sup>

Stevenson, writing earlier, was very critical of farming practices in the weald, noting, “the inferiority in management of the lands the badness of the crops, the uncouthness and want of intelligence among farmers and the general circumstances attending inadequate skill and capital.”<sup>32</sup> He attributed this to the survival of “many of the old class of farmers, men who are shy and jealous of communication, unwilling to adopt any new modes of husbandry.”<sup>33</sup> He had also noted in the weald the “ruinous and mean appearance of the farm houses and offices.”<sup>34</sup> Caird was also very critical of Surrey’s wealden farmers, noting “many of them scarcely able to sign their own name” and that they failed to take advantage of the London market, instead “following a system suited to farms 500 miles distant from the metropolis.”<sup>35</sup>

The area where some progress was evident was in the north of the county, where a large acreage of well fertilised land (approximately 3500 acres) could be found, in close proximity of the London market. This was used to grow market garden crops, including cabbages, carrots and beans, for the London market.<sup>36</sup> Potatoes were not a commonly grown crop except in the vicinity of Tooting, Streatham and Norwood.

Of course, in many areas the backward nature of Surrey farming resulted in inefficient farming. For example, during the Napoleonic wars, when grain was at a premium, threshing machines were used in the north of England and Scottish lowlands, whilst in the south east the machines available were poorly constructed and inefficient to operate. In

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.79.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79.

<sup>35</sup> J. Caird, *English agriculture* (London, Cass, 1968 reprint), pp. 62–3 .

<sup>36</sup> Malden, *The Victoria county*, pp. 455–6.

Surrey there were very few of them.<sup>37</sup> After 1815 the introduction of new implements and new tools for farming “almost marked time for about twenty years”.<sup>38</sup> In many areas including the south of England Collins notes “inertia mostly prevailed” and there was no incentive for farmers to make changes, and new techniques were abandoned.<sup>39</sup> Stevenson referred to the wealden farmers as the “round-frocked farmers” and “enemies to improvements in agriculture.”<sup>40</sup>

### *Livestock*

Stevenson noted that Surrey was “thinly stocked” and “scarcely a cattle or sheep was bred within it.”<sup>41</sup> In fact Surrey was not known for its cattle and there seemed to be no particular breed that Surrey could claim as its own and very little breeding of stock took place. Some farmers kept cows to supply the London market and cows were also kept by gentlemen to provide milk for their families.<sup>42</sup> In the Esher, Cobham, Send and Ripley area farmers had traditionally reared calves in large numbers for the London market but by the early nineteenth century the practice was declining.

Sheep farming in Surrey was more popular, and they were bred in the central and western parts of the county. Sheep were kept in large numbers upon the chalk hills and on the sandy loams that lie immediately between the chalk downs and weald.<sup>43</sup> For example, on farms in the parish of Chaldon, situated high on the chain of hills, the land was chiefly laid down to arable, with sheep fed on turnips. The Guildford and Ewell areas, in particular, specialised in rearing grass lambs. At the end of the eighteenth century Surrey had

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<sup>37</sup> S. Macdonald, ‘The progress of the early threshing machine’, *Agricultural History Review*, 23 (1975) 66–76.

<sup>38</sup> J. Brown and H.A. Beecham, ‘Farming techniques’ in G.E.Mingay (ed), *The agrarian history of England and Wales 1750 - 1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989 ), p.307.

<sup>39</sup> E. J. T. Collins, ‘Harvest technology and labour supply in Britain 1790–1870’, *Economic History Review*, 22 (1969), 457.

<sup>40</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.88.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.519.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.392.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.526.

gained a reputation for the “excellence of the house lambs “ which its farmers sent to the London market.<sup>44</sup> By the early nineteenth century this practice was in decline because of the “increase in the price of labour and in the first cost of the ewes” which meant the business was not as profitable. Nonetheless some farmers in the Ewell, Esher and Walton area continued to rear house lambs for the London market.<sup>45</sup>

### *Enclosure in Surrey*

After a journey from Farnham to Guildford in 1769 Arthur Young wrote that “I did not find the county productive or advanced in farming.”<sup>46</sup> Forty years later Stevenson commented, “Surrey appears to be behind most other counties in the proportion to which the land which has been enclosed and brought into cultivation bears to the whole surface of the county.”<sup>47</sup> He was surprised that one-sixth of county comprised heaths and wastelands, including parks and commons, and commented that “almost all the heath might be planted with every prospect of success.”<sup>48</sup> He also recognised “the poor and sterile nature of a very considerable part of the wastes.”<sup>49</sup> Allen was also surprised in 1829 to learn “that so near London the county should contain a prodigious quantity of wasteland.”<sup>50</sup> Gonner explained that the slow progress of enclosure in Surrey was due to the extent of land in the county that was of little value for agricultural purposes. Not only was much of the usable land heavily wooded, but land that was agriculturally desirable had been enclosed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>51</sup> Tate also commented that “the Parliamentary enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represent the

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<sup>44</sup> Allen, *History of the counties*, p.22.

<sup>45</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.533.

<sup>46</sup> Malden, *The Victoria county*, p.457.

<sup>47</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.142.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.413.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.457 and 142.

<sup>50</sup> Allen, *History of the counties*, p.18.

<sup>51</sup> E.C.K. Gonner, *Common land and inclosure* (London, Macmillan, 1912), pp.38–40.



culmination and completion of a process” which had been going on from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>52</sup>

The first Parliamentary enclosure acts for Surrey date from 1769 and there were enclosure acts for Cobham in 1779 and Mickleham in 1797. By 1801, when the General Act facilitating enclosure was passed, Slater found only six acts for Surrey, encompassing an area of 7,702 acres.<sup>53</sup> After 1801 the enclosure movement gained momentum, as is shown in the comparison of the 1794 and 1808 reports of the Board of Agriculture (see Table 2.2):

Table 2.2 *Surrey enclosures 1794–1808*

Land	Situation In 1794	12–14 Years Of Enclosure	1808 Situation After Enclosure: Land Left Unenclosed
Heath	48,180	4,500	43,680
Wasteland	17,410	4,900	12,510
Common fields	10,050	2,700	7,350
Total	75,640	12,100	63,540

Source: W. James and J. Malcolm, *A general view of the agriculture of the county of Surrey* (London, Thomas Wilson and Sons, 1794) and W. Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Surrey drawn up for the consideration of the Board of Agriculture* (London, Sherwood Neely and Jones, 1813)

In his report Stevenson commented with disappointment on the slow rate of enclosure, noting that “only one seventh part of all the waste lands has been enclosed” since 1794.<sup>54</sup> He thought that the county was admirably placed both for procuring the means of improvement and for disposing of increased amounts of produce in the London market. Parton noted “of the 70,000 acres of sundry waste that lay unclaimed in Surrey in 1800

<sup>52</sup> W. E. Tate, ‘Enclosure acts and awards relating to lands in the county of Surrey’, *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 68 (1953) 136.

<sup>53</sup> G. Slater, *The English peasantry and the enclosures of common fields* (London, Constable, 1907), p.144.

<sup>54</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, pp. 457 and 480.

only a small fraction was brought into cultivation in the first half of the nineteenth century.”<sup>55</sup>

Stevenson particularly disapproved of the existence of a large number of common fields. He considered their survival as “more injurious and more disgraceful to the county than that of commons and heaths.”<sup>56</sup> The two Agricultural Reports reveal the existence of very few open fields in the Weald of Surrey: “They are almost entirely confined to the district north of the chalk hills” with the exceptions of the common fields at Betchworth, Burstow, Gatton and Bletchingley.<sup>57</sup> Stevenson considered that, once enclosed, the land would be farmed more profitably; he cited the recent enclosure of Send Little Mead where the land was now let at 23s per acre compared with 10s an acre before enclosure.<sup>58</sup> Beazley agreed with Stevenson that enclosure of common fields made them more profitable, pointing to the recent enclosure in Ewell where the rents had doubled.<sup>59</sup>

A desire to effect improvement and increase revenue from agricultural rents inspired the majority of enclosure bills. For example John Houghton had begun his attempts to improve the Bagshot Heath before the low prices of the early 1830s curtailed further enclosure. He reported to the 1836 Select Committee on Agriculture that “I am restrained of going on in my improvements in consequence of the low price of agricultural produce or I should have gone much further.”<sup>60</sup> To improve poor lands Parton pointed out there must be a concentration of “improving landlords and tenants.” He noted that 4,000 acres in Windlesham were enclosed in 1814 but fifty years later only a few nursery grounds and

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<sup>55</sup> A.G. Parton, ‘Parliamentary enclosure in nineteenth century Surrey some perspectives on the evaluation of land potential’, *Agricultural History Review*, 33 (1985) 57.

<sup>56</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.471.

<sup>57</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.472 and Malden, *The Victoria county*, p.438.

<sup>58</sup> Stevenson, *General View*, p.476.

<sup>59</sup> S. Beazley, *A general view of the system of enclosing wastelands with particular reference to the proposed enclosure at Epsom Surrey* (London, C. Chapple, 1812), p.46.

<sup>60</sup> Report of the Select Committee to inquire into the state of agriculture VIII 1836, Evidence of J. Houghton Question 846 pp. 51–2.

some coniferous plantations showed any signs of improvement to the land.<sup>61</sup> Of course, the cost of improving land, especially poor land, was expensive and landowners were only prepared to invest in improvements if they were assured of a return on their money. As a result, it is evident that during times of high prices such as the Napoleonic Wars, farmers were encouraged to enclose marginal lands but conversely, in times of agricultural depression, this was the first land to go out of cultivation (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 *Surrey enclosure awards, 1760–1845*

Surrey Enclosure Awards	Total
1760–1765	0
1765–1770	1
1770–1775	3
1775–1780	1
1780–1785	0
1785–1790	1
1790–1795	1
1795–1800	3
1800–1805	10
1805–1810	11
1810–1815	8
1815–1820	3
1820–1825	6
1825–1830	2
1830–1835	0
1835–1840	2
1840–1845	1

Source: A.G. Parton, 'Parliamentary Enclosure in Nineteenth Century Surrey some perspectives on the evaluation of land potential' *Agricultural History Review* 33, (1985) 52.

<sup>61</sup> Parton, 'Parliamentary enclosure', p.55.

Not all enclosure was subject to enclosure acts and on some occasions arrangements were made between tenant or landowner and the lord of the manor. For example, in Ockham a tenant wrote to lord of the manor, "I am cutting down the old hedge which is past mending and propose planting a fresh hedge so as to take in this waste."<sup>62</sup> Stevenson also noted in his report there was a tendency in some parts of Surrey for landowners to enlarge their farms. This accelerated the growing social divisions in the community for engrossing tended to increase the size of farms at the expense of the small landowners.<sup>63</sup> In 1788 William Joliffe bought the manor of Merstham on the edge of the chalk hills, and by the time of his death in 1802 he had consolidated many smallholdings into large farms as leases fell in.<sup>64</sup>

The rural poor suffered as a result of enclosure which resulted in reduced access to the land. For most cottagers, enclosure meant not only the loss of land on which to grow crops but also it meant a decline in the ownership of livestock, the loss of a cow or pig. In Dorking in 1814, for example, there had been some loss of common land when the manor of Milton was granted to Robert Barclay to enclose "part of the waste of this manor of Milton Heath."<sup>65</sup> Cottagers lost grazing rights and the right to collect wood that provided fuel for heat and cooking and this meant they became completely reliant on waged labour, which "paralleled their dependency on it as consumers, for food, fuel, clothing and housing."<sup>66</sup> The Bishop of Bath and Wells, writing in 1830, addressed this subject of the disappearance of English common land. "From these commons the poor man received great and substantial benefit, they afforded pasture to his domestic animals and fuel for his hearth. Now all these advantages are swallowed up in the allotments of the large proprietors and nothing is at present possessed by the poor man, which is an equivalent

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<sup>62</sup> SHC Acc 319, 'Goulbourn IV/6, 14/1'.

<sup>63</sup> H. G. Hunt, 'Landownership and enclosure 1750–1830', *Economic History Review* second series 11, 3 (1959), 505.

<sup>64</sup> Malden, *The Victoria county*, p.215.

<sup>65</sup> SHC 192/2/2, 'Manor of Milton, Manorial Court Records (1814)'.

<sup>66</sup> R. Wells, 'The moral economy of the English countryside', in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds), *Moral economy and popular protest crowds, conflict and authority* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000), p.211.

for what he has lost.”<sup>67</sup> Charles Jerram of Chobham estimated access to the common for the labourer “for firing was worth about £2 a year.”<sup>68</sup> Majendie confirmed that enclosure of wasteland in 1809 in Lingfield had “been injurious to the poor”: they gathered their fuel, kept cows, sheep and pigs and now “they could no longer keep stock and their lands fell into the occupation of the adjoining farmers.”<sup>69</sup>

### *Transportation*

Good transportation was essential if agriculture and trade were to develop in the county, and the opening of the Wey navigation in the 1650s confirmed the position of Guildford as the main collecting point for onward trade to London. Throughout the length of the River Wey and its tributaries, wharves equipped with sawpits, timber yards, bark stores and hoop sheds lined the water’s edge. By 1830 wood and timber comprised over 60 per cent of all traffic passing the Thames Lock at Weybridge en route for London. In 1831 hoops and bark accounted for nearly a quarter of all downward traffic, the majority of which had originated south and east of Guildford (see Table 2.4).<sup>70</sup> It also meant that the county benefited from supplies of all sorts (particularly coal) brought up the River Thames from London.<sup>71</sup> The market gardens in the north of the county used the Thames to transport their fragile goods into the capital.

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<sup>67</sup> H. G. Law, *Remarks on present distress of poor* (London, 1830).

<sup>68</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws (1834), Extracts from information received by Poor law Commissioners for Surrey Appendix B. Part 1 XXX Evidence Charles Jerram, Question 10. p. 495a.

<sup>69</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Assistant Commissioner for Surrey A. Majendie, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII, Lingfield p. 175A.

<sup>70</sup> C. Hadfield, *The canals of southern England* (London, Phoenix House, 1955), p. 102.

<sup>71</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p. 356.

Table 2.4 *Canal transportation passing through the Wey Navigation, 1831*

Downward Traffic Passing Through The Wey Navigation in 1831	Timber (tons)	Hoops (tons)	Bark (tons)	Flour (tons)
Wharves below Guildford	1,240 $\frac{3}{4}$	279 $\frac{3}{4}$	36 $\frac{1}{4}$	1,316 $\frac{1}{2}$
Guildford	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	106 $\frac{3}{4}$	56 $\frac{3}{4}$	104 $\frac{1}{2}$
Wharves Above Guildford	5,342	3,800 $\frac{1}{4}$	2,262 $\frac{1}{4}$	2,980 $\frac{1}{2}$
Basingstoke Canal	3,041	574 $\frac{1}{4}$	442 $\frac{1}{2}$	1,191 $\frac{3}{4}$
Totals	9,632 $\frac{1}{2}$	4,761	2,797 $\frac{3}{4}$	5,593 $\frac{1}{4}$

Source: C. Hadfield, *The Canals of Southern England* (London, Phoenix House, 1955) p.125

A number of mills, mainly producing flour, iron and paper, lay along the rivers Mole and Wey. The county's first iron railway, using horse traction, opened in 1803, running between Wandsworth and Croydon, with an extension in 1805 to Merstham. It was not a commercial success as the railway could not compete with the Croydon Canal, which carried goods into the heart of the metropolis at a much cheaper rate. The final ruin of the Surrey Iron Railway Company came with the introduction of the steam train into Surrey in 1837 when the London to Brighton line opened. In 1844 the London and South-Western Railway Company bought the Surrey Iron Railway Company.<sup>72</sup>

Surrey's road system was poor, which hampered communication. Stevenson criticised the narrow road system across rural Surrey and the state of the wealden roads. Movement across the weald was restricted and the area remained isolated until the mid-nineteenth century. The difficulties of crossing the weald led to a peculiar road system of trackways with wide verges, so when one part of the track became impassable the traveller moved

<sup>72</sup> Malden, *The Victoria county*, p.258.

onto the verge.<sup>73</sup> Stevenson commented that the turnpike roads were not well managed or maintained. He criticised their construction as lacking proper foundations and found them liable to flooding. His only favourable comments were for the cross roads along the Surrey hills.<sup>74</sup> Of course, an inferior road system meant the movement of agricultural produce to market was difficult.

### *Landownership in Surrey*

In comparison to a great part of the country, Surrey contained a small number of great estates and, as a result, the squirearchy and the greater yeoman class predominated.<sup>75</sup> Thompson estimated that estates of over 10,000 acres only occupied 10% of the county's area: the Earl of Onslow with 11,761 acres; Earl Lovelace with 10,134 acres; Lord Monson of Gatton Park with 10,134 acres and Lord Hylton of Merstham with 10,038 acres. In Thompson's survey of aristocratic presence in the English counties, based on the number of country seats and great estates, Surrey emerges as one of the ten least aristocratic areas in the country.<sup>76</sup> This, he explained, was due to its close proximity to London, which meant that, as in other home counties "the demand for land was such that it was impossible or undesirable to build up or retain very large estates."<sup>77</sup> Thompson also estimated that Surrey was ranked in thirty-first place in relation to estates over 3,000 acres and in 1883 Bateman estimated 22% of estates in Surrey were approximately 300 – 1000 acres: 13% occupied by properties of 100–300 acres and 12% of holdings of 1–100 acres.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Lord, 'Communities of common', 136.

<sup>74</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.547.

<sup>75</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *English landed society in the nineteenth century*, (London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1963), p.32.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.32–3.

<sup>78</sup> Bateman, *The great landowners*, p.509.

Amongst the Surrey squirearchy there were several families who could claim a Surrey lineage: for example, the More-Molyneux family at Loseley outside Guildford, and the Westons who held Sutton Place land in the Guildford area. There were others such as the Onslows, and the Austen family in Shalford, who had come to Surrey in the sixteenth century, and the Sumner family, who had arrived in the eighteenth century. Burke noted there was a tendency for ancient proprietorship to be displaced by wealthy merchants, bankers and manufacturers, especially around large cities.<sup>79</sup> This was true of Surrey with its close proximity to London. Men of means were attracted to the county and Stevenson noted, “there are few counties which can vie with Surrey in the number and elegance of its gentlemen’s seats.”<sup>80</sup> Chartham in the parish of Lingfield was the mansion of G Boon Roupell, a barrister, and Cobham Park mansion, the seat of the brewer, Harvey Coombe.

Surrey’s healthy climate also attracted gentlemen. Greenwood commented that Surrey was “a choice situation for rural mansions and retirement of Members of Parliament and wealthy inhabitants of the metropolis.”<sup>81</sup> This was deemed particularly so near the northern foot of the chalk hills where “the dryness of the soil and climate in this part and the entire freedom from smoke of the metropolis by the prevalence of the westerly winds”<sup>82</sup> made this area particularly desirable. Sir Lucas Pepys Bart, late physician to George IV, retired to Juniper Hall in the parish of Mickleham. In the nearby large parish of Dorking there were many wealthy residences with parks and plantations. George Dewdney, a banker, lived in Charlwood House. The area was described in a commercial directory as a place suitable for invalids in summer months to “enjoy the salubrity of the air and the beauty of the prospect.”<sup>83</sup> Similarly, numerous wealthy mansions and estates lined and adjoined the River Thames as, for example, Burwood mansion in Walton-on-Thames, the seat of Vice Admiral Sir Thomas Williams, and Coombe House mansion

<sup>79</sup> J. B. Burke, *The vicissitudes of families* ( London, Longman Green Longman and Roberts, 1861), p.4.

<sup>80</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.77.

<sup>81</sup> Greenwood and Greenwood, *Surrey*, p.xvi.

<sup>82</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p. 19.

<sup>83</sup> Pigot and Co., *London and Provincial New Commercial Directory 1826–7 Surrey* p.669.



outside Kingston-upon-Thames, the home of the Earl of Liverpool.<sup>84</sup> Of course, the occupiers of the many “elegant seats and extensive parks and plantations” had no great ties to the land.<sup>85</sup> They were not dependent on income from agriculture so did not require their land to return a profit. Stevenson noted among “opulent gentlemen of the county whom every improvement should be encouraged by example it has not until lately been taken up with spirit.”<sup>86</sup> For example, just after buying Brook Farm in Cobham in 1805 Admiral Sir Graham Moore commented, “I have involved myself perhaps rather imprudently in farming, of which I am totally ignorant.”<sup>87</sup> Other families as, for example, Thomas Broadwood, piano manufacturer, lived in Capel and the Combe family, brewers, of Cobham Park did not require farm labourers to tend their farms but only employed a small force to tend their plantations and parks.

Armstrong has also observed that a subtle feature of the late eighteenth century was the tendency towards the enlargement of the social distance between landowners and village life, “setting themselves apart in walled acres of parkland, and occasionally even withdrawing altogether.”<sup>88</sup> For example, nine years after Admiral Sir Graham Moore bought Brook farm in Cobham in 1805, he commented that “the greatest drawback I feel to the satisfaction of living here is the want of that kind of society which I like and which is seldom to be met within the country.”<sup>89</sup> In 1824 he purchased approximately an additional eighty acres, which increased the estate to 164 acres, giving him greater privacy. He therefore decided he would not let land near the house as “it would be uncomfortable and inconvenient.”<sup>90</sup> In addition, during the years 1805–1826 Moore spent very little time in Cobham: “I have never been two complete years constantly resident here since I bought the place” and so remained aloof from the local farming community. Cobbett also noted

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<sup>84</sup> Greenwood and Greenwood, *Surrey*, p.55.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

<sup>86</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.81.

<sup>87</sup> T.E.C. Walker, ‘The Diary of Admiral Sir Graham Moore of Brook farm Cobham’, *Surrey Archaeological Collection*, 60 (1963) 64.

<sup>88</sup> A. Armstrong, *Farmworkers a social and economic history 1770–1980* (London, B.T. Batsford, 1988), p. 58.

<sup>89</sup> Walker, ‘The diary’, 65.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

that among the owners of many estates were a growing class of successful professional men, prosperous merchants, country bankers and city men, whom he considered “tax eaters” and “fund lords.”<sup>91</sup>

This isolation and little direct involvement in farming by many large landowners was an area for growing tension with the local agricultural labourers and tenant farmers. When Henry Drummond, landowner and magistrate of Surrey, gave evidence to the Select Committee on Labourers Wages in 1824, he criticised the way Surrey farmers treated their agricultural labourers. In reply, sixty-nine small farmers and “others” from the hundreds of Blackheath Godalming and Woking published their reply, defending themselves and setting out how they believed they supported rather than oppressed the agricultural labourers. These two statements clearly show the division in rural society between a large landowner and his perceptions of the problems, and the small farmers and their understanding of the situation.<sup>92</sup> This separation is important to note and is discussed further in chapter seven.

### *Farm tenure*

Throughout Surrey the predominant system of farm tenure was leasehold, although in the Weald and in the Bagshot area farm tenure mostly comprised tenancies-at-will.<sup>93</sup> James and Malcolm’s 1794 report on Surrey noted the small size of farms. Henry Evershed’s later survey produced a broadly similar picture. He observed that farms on the Bagshot sands averaged between 50–100 acres; farms on the chalk downs averaged 300 acres; in the Greensand district farms were approximately 250 acres and in the Weald the average

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<sup>91</sup> G.D.H. Cole and M. Cole (eds), *The opinions of William Cobbett* (London, The Cobbett Publishing House, 1944), p.87.

<sup>92</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Labourers’ Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in Employment VI 1824, Evidence Henry Drummond pp.40–8 BPP, and Reply Surrey farmers SHC, 7473/box 6.

<sup>93</sup> Evershed, ‘On farming’, 400. Leases seven, fourteen or twenty-one years and tenancies at will, a leasehold that either the landlord or the tenant may terminate the tenancy at any time by giving notice.

size of farms were maller than the rest of the county.<sup>94</sup> Stevenson noted that wealden farms were approximately 100–150 acres and some were as small as about fifty acres.<sup>95</sup>

Outside the influence of the London market, rents remained low in the first half of the century. For example, the cold ill-drained clays were inflexible and expensive to work so that rents on much of the wealden clays only amounted to 10s an acre.<sup>96</sup> The lighter soils enjoyed the benefits of lower costs so the rich sand loams near Godalming commanded between 25s and 30s.<sup>97</sup> In the north-east, the London clay region required good drainage to be productive and rents stood at £1 an acre with similar sums being paid for farms in the chalk district to the south. Landowners obtained higher rents in the north and west of the county because proximity to the London market resulted in highly productive market gardening, using manure from the capital. On the more fertile parts of the Bagshot sands rents reached £4 an acre on land which was easy to cultivate, and in the west rentals of up to £20 an acre were reported in the Farnham hop district.<sup>98</sup>

#### *The effects of the agricultural depression on the labour market*

As in other parts of southern England during the period 1815–1834, the county of Surrey experienced a time of increasing hardship and distress for the agricultural labourer.<sup>99</sup> The south of England was particularly badly hit as a large proportion of the farming was arable and “arable farming is by nature rhythmic in that its needs for labour vary at different times of the year, it was unable to offer stable employment outside planting and harvest times and the result was seasonal unemployment and underemployment at low wages.”<sup>100</sup>

Marginal land brought under the plough during the war was now no longer used and this

<sup>94</sup> Evershed, ‘On the farming’, 410.

<sup>95</sup> Stevenson, *General view*, p.84.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>98</sup> Evershed, ‘On the farming’, 400–5.

<sup>99</sup> A. Armstrong, *Farmworkers, A social and economic history 1770–1980* (London, B.T. Batsford, 1988), pp.61–2.

<sup>100</sup> House of Lords 58. 1830–31 Tabular Statement (27) VIII p.321.

resulted in further unemployment. Between 1813 and the accession of Queen Victoria, “falls one of the blackest periods of English farming.”<sup>101</sup> In the period “1814–16 the agricultural industry passed suddenly from prosperity to extreme depression” and although the “1820s was not a period of soaring food prices, this was a time of seasonal and structural unemployment.”<sup>102</sup>

In addition, population increase had become more rapid in the later eighteenth century and expanded faster than agriculture or industry could absorb it (see Table 2.5). In consequence, “the effects of population growth on rural unemployment and poverty were much more marked where alternative industrial occupations were not available.”<sup>103</sup> Of course this applied to rural Surrey. In addition, there was little diversification of employment to take up the slack in the labour market.

Table 2.5 *Surrey population figures 1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831*

County of Surrey	1801	1811	1821	1831
Population Figures	269,043	323,851	398,658	485,700
	-----20%-----rise	-----23%-----rise	-----22%-----rise	

Source: Abstract of census returns for the county of Surrey, 1803/4 xiii(174), 1812 xi(316), 1822 xv (502), 1833 xxxvi (149).

The situation was exacerbated by the demobilisation of 350,000 men from the armed forces, who swamped a rural market already faced with excess labour. As the number of unemployed labourers rose, their bargaining position weakened and the wages of the

<sup>101</sup> Lord Ernle, *English farming* (London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1961), p.319

<sup>102</sup> Ernle, *English farming*, pp. 322 and J. P. Huzel, ‘The Labourer and the poor law 1750–1850 in G.E. Mingay (ed), *The agrarian history of England and Wales 1750–1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.767.

<sup>103</sup> J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay, *The agricultural revolution 1750–1880* (London, B.T. Batsford, 1968) p.103.

rural agricultural labourer dropped. Farmers reduced the number of servants and labourers in their employment and it was commonplace in Surrey in winter months for the number of surplus labourers to increase.<sup>104</sup> In the south of England and Wales there is a great deal of evidence to support the view that the want of “regular employment was the chief malaise affecting the labouring classes after 1815.”<sup>105</sup> The replies to the Rural Queries of the Poor Law Commissioners showed the existence of a labour surplus in some parishes in Surrey that made a return (see Table 2.6)

Table 2.6 *Surplus labour for seven Surrey parishes as reported by the Poor Law Commissioners 1834*

Parish	1801 Population	1831 Population	Surplus Labour 1833
Abinger	620	767	20–30 All Year
Chobam	1176	1937	20–30 Winter 15–20 summer (Harvest Full Employment)
Great Bookham	587	890	6
Farnham	4321	5858	100–150 Winter 20–40 Summer
Godstone	1081	1397	10–40 Winter 10–20 Summer
Haslemere	642	849	No Comment
Lingfield	1387	1814	20–60

Source: Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners (1834) Rural Queries Appendix B Part 1 XXX Question 45.

In their pursuit of efficiency farmers were compelled to monitor the size of the labour bills.

Armstrong notes, “it was here that the agricultural depression, however qualified,

<sup>104</sup> W. A. Armstrong, ‘Labour I: Rural population growth, systems of employment, and incomes’ in G.E. Mingay (ed), *The agrarian history*, pp. 708–11.

<sup>105</sup> D. Howell, *Land and people in nineteenth century Wales* (London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978), p.102.

impinged directly on the lives of farm workers and their families.”<sup>106</sup> Farmers reduced their expenditure and laid off their servants and labourers and became more reliant on day labour in their pursuit of efficiency. It had been common practice in England for farmers to provide room and board for servants in husbandry, but after 1795 high wartime food prices and a surplus of labour meant farmers were encouraged to employ labourers for daily wages. There was erosion of boarding-in for farm servants because “the farm servant, boarded and lodged in the farmhouse, was an alien element in the economy of the large farm; and now, as prices rose, payment in kind was largely given up in those southern and midland districts.”<sup>107</sup> From 1815 the practice of casual hiring on a daily basis became commonplace. In rural Surrey farm labourers had become essentially casual labourers, hired and dismissed at will, further weakening the ties that had traditionally bound the farm servant to his employer.<sup>108</sup> In rural Surrey during the period 1815–1834 the growth of under-employment and poverty was evident, and this increased the dependence of the poor on parish poor relief.

### *Distress of the farmers*

Agricultural investment and farming activity intensified during the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic Wars when the absence of foreign competition meant farmers had an incentive and were prepared to borrow heavily and expand their production for the home market. Prices were high so farmers could pay high rents and could cultivate poor land for a profit. “This inflationary bubble was pricked towards the end of wartime” when wheat prices began to fall and agriculture suffered.<sup>109</sup> Members of the Select Committee on Agricultural Distress of 1821 recognised the inevitably depressing effect of the current deflation. The twin factors, falling prices and the dearth of “good quality of the harvests”,

<sup>106</sup> A. Armstrong, *Farmworkers, A social and economic history 1770–1980* (London, B.T. Batsford, 1988) p.62.

<sup>107</sup> W. Hasbach, *The history of the English agricultural labourer* (London, P.S. King and Son, 1908), p.177–8.

<sup>108</sup> See Chapter Seven

<sup>109</sup> E.L. Jones, *The development of English agriculture 1815–1873* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1968), p.10.

made conditions for profitable farming difficult to attain.<sup>110</sup> The distress, according to the farmers, was greatest on arable land, and that affected Surrey. In 1813 wheat averaged over 100s a quarter but it had dropped to 65s 7d in 1815. With the exception of the two years 1818 and 1825 there was a downward trend in prices, with the the general level of prices stabilised “at a comparatively low level” between 1829 and 1832 with wheat at 65s.<sup>111</sup> It has also been noted that witnesses to Select Committees from 1820 to 1833 complained that agricultural “prices were too low in relation to an extended and costly production.”<sup>112</sup> Grain prices had fallen more than those of meat and wool, and consequently the very branch of agriculture that had received the greatest stimulus during the war was now the hardest hit. Those farmers who had borrowed money to reclaim waste or to improve the heavy clay lands now found these poor arable lands unprofitable as a result of falling prices. William Jacob reported that the rate of agricultural production in England and Europe now meant there was a surplus of production and it could result in “the total ruin of the occupiers of land in this country” if some adjustments were not made.<sup>113</sup> Falling prices and exceptional fluctuations in yield were two of the general conditions facing farmers, and of course falling prices also affected industry and commerce while these were “not general and equal; the fall in corn was severe beyond measure.”<sup>114</sup>

The agricultural depression badly affected Surrey. In a county where agricultural practice was viewed as backward and where large extents of poor soils existed which required large-scale investment to make them workable, farmers struggled to survive. After 1815 farmers complained that their costs did not fall as rapidly as the price of their produce. Rents had roughly doubled during the Napoleonic wars and although there was some

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<sup>110</sup> Report of the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agricultural IX (1821) p. 6.

<sup>111</sup> F. E. Tinsell and M. Compton, ‘Agricultural adjustments after the Napoleonic wars’ *Economic History* 4 (1939) 188.

<sup>112</sup> Tinsell and Compton, ‘Agricultural Adjustments’, 188.

<sup>113</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agricultural IX 1821, Evidence W. Jacob 8 May 1821, p. 356.

<sup>114</sup> J.R. McCulloch (ed), *The works of David Ricardo Esq. M.P./ with a notice of the life and writings of the author* (London, Murray, 1871), p.45.

reduction in rent, in the distress of 1815 and 1816, the Board of Agriculture's enquiries showed many landlords had rents unpaid and farms fell vacant.<sup>115</sup> Although there was some rent reduction in the 1820s, farmers were still paying rents which were still not far from double the pre-war level, while their prices had fallen to a level only 10 to 20 per cent higher than pre-war.<sup>116</sup> The effect in Surrey can clearly be seen in the Report of the Board of Agriculture that in 1816 published interviews with six large Surrey landowners. Joseph Pennington of Godstone commented that the distress of farmers would only be relieved if there were "a rise in the prices of the produce of the earth."<sup>117</sup> Thomas Page of Cobham noted that "the distress of the farmers shows itself by paying up no arrears of rent and frequent seizures and unpaid parochial taxes."<sup>118</sup> He also proposed that agriculture prices should rise. All six commented on farms going out of cultivation, and William Dalrymple of Chessington claimed that in the parish of 1040 acres "there are at present three bankrupt farms of about 520 acres... and are lying in a most deplorable state."<sup>119</sup> "By 1816 the balmy days of wartime agricultural prosperity were over, to be replaced by some years of rent abatements, arrears and short leases."<sup>120</sup>

The post-war depression also saw the further decline of small occupying owners and tenants (see Table 2.7). When prices fell after the war many small owners could not sustain the costs of running their farms and sold out to professional men, bankers and retired city men. Mr Birbeck also noted there were at present "innumerable advertisements of farming stock" and sheep dealers taking back sheep they had sold for want of payment.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>115</sup> J. Pennington, *The agricultural state of the kingdom* (New York, Augustus M. Kelley, reprint 1970)

<sup>116</sup> Chambers and Mingay, *The agricultural revolution*, p.129.

<sup>117</sup> Pennington, *The agricultural*, p.330.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>120</sup> S. Macdonald, 'The Progress of the Early Threshing Machines', *The Agricultural History Review* 23 (1975) 74.

<sup>121</sup> Pennington, *The agricultural*, p.334.



Table 2.7 Unoccupied farms in 1816

Place	Name	Unoccupied	Notice To Quit	Abatement Of Rent
Cobham	T. Page	Several of Lord King's and at Esher £1500 per annum	Several	
Surrey	Ad. Murray	1 Of 300 acres, 1 Of 350 Acres, 1 Of 150 Acres; 1 Of 130 Acres, One Waste		
Ewell	T. Calverley	Several	1 Of £700 Per Annum, 1 Of £500 Per Annum	From 10% to 20%
Warnborough	M. Birbeck	A Few		From 20% to 30%
Godstone	J. Pennington	1 Of Above 300 Acres	Several Extensive Ones	Approximately 25%
Chessington	W. Dalrymple	3 Farms Abandoned	None	

Source: J. Pennington, *Board of Agriculture: The agricultural state of the kingdom* (New York, Augustus M. Kelley, reprint 1970) p.329

Many small farmers had insufficient resources to survive the years of agricultural depression. Cobbett complained that he had noted after 1815 that too many “small farmers have become mere hired labourers,” as was the case of Charles Cosins of Dorking.<sup>122</sup> He was a tenant farmer in Dorking, in the Holmwood area, who rented land until 1830 when he lost his farm and became a pauper of the parish. The land reverted to Steere who owned large amounts of land both in Dorking and Capel (see Table 2.8).

<sup>122</sup> FM., *Political Register*, ‘17 March 1821’.

Table 2.8 *Rate assessment for Charles Cosins of the parish of Dorking 1824–1830*

Land	Assessed	To Pay Half Yearly
Wickes Land	£10	£1 10s
Redland Farm	£57 10s	£8 12s 6d
The Coppices	£5	15s
Land Late Grey	£13 10s	£2 0s 6d

Source: SHC Dorking LA4/6/1 1818–1828 and Acc 1358/4/1 1829–1836.

In addition, the decreasing profitability forced many farmers to lay off labourers with the result that the poor law authorities had to cope with the problems of providing for the growing numbers of unemployed poor. Of course, funds for parish relief came from the rating assessments and increasingly farmers complained about the rising poor rates. Thomas Drewitt in 1833 noted as the poor rates and county rates had increased, the resources of many farmers were now exhausted and subsequently they had to lay off labourers, which led to increasing rural unemployment.<sup>123</sup> Horley, a parish of 6000 acres, of which 3000 acres was arable land, 2000 acres pasture and 1000 acres wood and common, made a return to central government in 1831 when the houses and land were valued at £5085 and tithes at £875. In 1824 houses and land had been valued at £6379 and tithes at £875. The parish overseer explained this drop in valuation “in consequence of a succession of unfavourable seasons and the impoverished state of farmers from low prices and the burden of poor rates”.<sup>124</sup>

Question 36 of the Rural Queries questionnaire asked, “*Is the amount of agricultural capital increasing or diminishing? And do you attribute such increase or diminution to any cause connected with the Administration of the Poor laws?*”? From the following replies it can be seen that increased poor rates to provide for the poor was seen by many parishes

<sup>123</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Minutes of Evidence T. Drewitt p.47.

<sup>124</sup> SHC P30/7/320, ‘Horley Vestry minutes 25 March 1831’.

as the main reason for affecting agricultural prosperity (see Table 2.9). Of course these answers only represent the commonly held view at the time that by the beginning of the nineteenth century “the poor law had come to be regarded as profligate and extravagant.”<sup>125</sup> It must also be noted that the Commissioners did carefully select answers from the returns and “where they did not ignore the findings, they twisted them to suit their preconceived opinions.”<sup>126</sup>

Table 2.9 *Answers from ten Surrey parishes to the Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries 1834*

Parish	Diminishing Owing To The Increased Poor Rates	Price of Labour	Unfavourable Seasons	Decrease In The Price Of Corn And Stock	Increase In Families Indolence
Newdigate	x	x			
Send And Ripley	x		x	x	
Bletchingley	x				
Guildford St Nicolas			x		
Great Bookham			x	x	
Egham	x				
Guildford Holy Trinity And St Mary	x				x
Buckland	x				
Haslemere	x				
Merrow	x				

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries Appendix B Part 1 XXX, Question 36.

<sup>125</sup> M. Lyle, 'Regionality in the late old poor law: the treatment of chargeable bastards from Rural Queries', *Agricultural History Review* 53 (2005) 141.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 157 and Blaug 'The poor law report re-examined', *Journal of Economic History* 24 (1964) 243.

*Adverse conditions*

As Surrey was predominantly an arable and sheep farming county, the very poor weather conditions in certain years after 1815 also contributed to the suffering of farmers. The heavy rains late in 1816 resulted in a poor harvest and severe losses among the lambs. 1818, by contrast, saw a severe drought with reduced crops and reduced supplies of feed that resulted in lean stock. In the years 1821 to 1824 there were heavy rains in the summer and autumn months and severe outbreaks of sheep rot. 1825 and 1826 were years of prolonged summer drought with consequent fodder shortages in the succeeding winters. Wet summers in 1828, 1829 and 1830 produced poor harvests, which helped to keep the price of wheat above 60s a quarter. "In 1830–31 occurred the most serious outbreak of sheep rot of the whole century, apart from the outbreak of 1879–80."<sup>127</sup> The rot of 1830–31 "was described as the most disastrous on record swept away two million sheep."<sup>128</sup> In 1832–33 agriculturalists in Parliament once more pressed for another select committee to enquire into the present state of agriculture. This committee met in 1833 and two landowners from Surrey gave evidence to the committee: Thomas Drewitt, who farmed 8,000 acres in Guildford, and George Smallpiece, who had farmed 1,000 acres in Cobham for over forty years. Richard Peyton, a land surveyor and agent for the south of England including Surrey, also gave evidence. This committee found farmers were no better off than they had been in 1821, in that the incomes on farming capital was still below what was considered a fair return. Drewitt's farm comprised both arable and meadow for sheep, but he reported to the committee that the sheep rot that had taken place four or five years ago in the county had depleted his flock of sheep and many farmers now could not afford to replenish their stock.<sup>129</sup> Smallpiece reported that in some parishes, where there had been once flocks of between 2000–3000 now they are "very

<sup>127</sup> Chambers and Mingay, *The agricultural revolution*, p.128.

<sup>128</sup> Erle, *English*, p. 325.

<sup>129</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Minutes of evidence T. Drewitt p. 476.

much diminished almost to nothing.”<sup>130</sup> Throughout his farming career Smallpiece commented that he had never seen such an extensive outbreak of sheep rot in twenty-five years.<sup>131</sup> He also reported that the recent two or three wet seasons had badly affected the farms in the Weald. “There are many thousands of acres getting out of cultivation daily” and farms in the Weald that had been let at 12s–14s an acre during the war years of great demand, now “would not let for more than 5s” and wheat yields decreased to 10–12 bushels to the acre instead of 18.<sup>132</sup> “The wet seasons tended to put all that land out of a proper state of cultivation” and as farmers could not afford to drain the land properly, it was not being improved.<sup>133</sup> In parts of Surrey there were vacant farms. Peyton in his evidence stated that some farmers in the Weald were forced to sell off stock on a Saturday to pay their labourers, and bankruptcies were frequent.<sup>134</sup> In other parts of Surrey, farms on unfavourable land also suffered. For example, one arable farm on heavy clay in Guildford was not occupied and another near Farnham that had been vacant for one or two years had now been let at 18d per acre. He commented that in the Godalming area, where the soil was fertile and light to work, farmers found it easier to survive. He recognised the depressed state of farming and attributed it to the outbreak of sheep rot; the recent wet summers and the poverty of the farmers.<sup>135</sup>

### *Industry*

Rural Surrey at the beginning of the nineteenth can by no means be called a manufacturing county. By the early nineteenth century Surrey was a low wage area with very little alternative employment to agriculture. The earliest industries to evolve in Surrey (and for a long period of time the most important) had been in the rural districts close to

<sup>130</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Minutes of evidence G. Smallpiece p. 608.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p.610.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 609.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 613.

<sup>134</sup> 1833, Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Minutes of Evidence R. Peyton Question 7321 and 7324 p. 340.

<sup>135</sup> 1833, Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Minutes of Evidence T. Drewitt pp. 476–7.

the southern borders of the county, but by, end of, eighteenth century these industries had declined. There was a gradual shifting of the county's industrial activity to the north of the county, to places adjoining the south bank of the River Thames and the banks of the River Wandle. By the nineteenth century, industrial activity took place in the Southwark, Bermondsey and Lambeth areas and on the banks of the River Wandle in the Merton area, where there were located a great number of flour, paper, snuff and oil mills, but these developments are outside the scope of this thesis.

An extensive iron smelting industry, established in the Surrey Weald in the middle of the sixteenth century, developed later than the iron industry of Sussex because the ore was more difficult to extract and to transport over the heavy wealden clay. After 1767 the industry went into decline when the process of smelting with coal was introduced. There is no contemporary evidence that points to the decline of this industry as being the cause of poverty or unemployment at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The replies to the Rural Queries of the Poor Law Commission for this area do not make the point.<sup>136</sup> There was an attempt to re-establish the iron industry at Felbridge Water, on the border with Sussex in the early nineteenth century by using imported coal, but it proved to be too expensive and the enterprise failed.<sup>137</sup> By 1830 the Weald had lost its industrial character and had become primarily agricultural. The production of charcoal remained the only industry of the area.

Manufacture of woollen cloth had been a staple industry of the Farnham, Guildford and Godalming areas in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries but by the end of the seventeenth century it had fallen into decay. The demise of the cloth trade in Guildford meant the town declined as a manufacturing centre, but there is no evidence to suggest that the volume of other goods handled by the town was in decline. Smallpiece reported

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<sup>136</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by poor law commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX pp. 473–88a,b,c,d,e.

<sup>137</sup> Malden, *The Victoria county*, p.268.

in 1833 that Guildford's tradesmen had fewer complaints about trade than most other towns in Surrey: "we have an excellent market, one of the best markets in England and there is a constant thoroughfare."<sup>138</sup> In Godalming alone the cloth industry appears to have continued into the eighteenth century, and in the early nineteenth century some kerseys and other cloths were made in the town. Godalming was also noted for its framework knitting. Various members of the Woods family carried on a business of framework knitting from 1701 to 1843, and when Elizabeth Marshall died in 1823 she had forty-three stocking frames in her stocking-maker's shop.<sup>139</sup> The Godalming frameworking knitting industry seems to have died out by the middle of the nineteenth century, but George Holland patented a method of working unspun fleece into knitting and in 1788 had set up a fleecy hosiery manufacture in Godalming.<sup>140</sup> A second hosiery factory was started in the town in 1860, but by the end of the nineteenth century both enterprises had closed.

The large supply of fullers' earth was one reason the cloth industry had flourished in and around Guildford and the district immediately south of the chalk hills. Fullers' earth was the most important mineral product of the county and great quantities were found in beds in the areas of Nutfield, Reigate, Merstham and Sutton. In 1814 the principal proprietor in the county of the fullers' earth pits was Mr Edward Russell of Holland House, Nutfield.<sup>141</sup> After the opening of the Surrey Iron Railway, considerable quantities were transported from Merstham to Wandsworth and then on to London by Thames barges. The earth dug in Surrey was of two qualities: the finer yellow fullers' earth that was used for fulling the kerseymeres and finer cloths of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire and the inferior blue fullers' earth which was used in Yorkshire for the manufacture of coarser cloth. The 1809 estimate for the annual consumption in England of fullers' earth was 6,300 tons and 4,000

<sup>138</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Minutes of evidence G. Smallpiece p. 614.

<sup>139</sup> Malden, *The Victoria county*, p.352.

<sup>140</sup> E. Brayley and J. Britton, *History of Surrey* (Robert Best Ede: Dorking, 1841), 5 App. 47.

<sup>141</sup> O. Manning and W. Bray, *History of Surrey 2* (London, White Cochrane and Co, 1814), p.266.

of these came from Surrey.<sup>142</sup> By 1814 there were only three pits open in Nutfield and one in Reigate. Work at the pits did not offer extensive employment opportunities as “no more than ten or twelve men were generally employed” at one pit.<sup>143</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were also numerous chalk pits and stone quarries in Surrey. Stone quarries could be found near Godstone, Gatton, Merstham, Reigate and Bletchingley, and limestone quarries near Dorking that “afford lime equal in purity and strength to any in the kingdom.”<sup>144</sup> It was also dug near Guildford, Sutton and Carshalton.

Another industry of note in Surrey was the manufacture of gunpowder that dated from the reign of Elizabeth I. The Chilworth gunpowder works was established in 1625 and became one of the most significant suppliers of gunpowder to the government. Cobbett, on his visit to Chilworth in 1822, noted the mills and referred to the making of gunpowder as the “most damnable of purposes.”<sup>145</sup> There were other powder mills in the county at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, at Ewell and in Long Ditton. The Malden Mills at Long Ditton, owned by William Taylor, were described in 1814 as extensive but the Chilworth works was one of the largest and most prestigious and longest-lived powder mills in the county.<sup>146</sup> In 1850 Brayley and Britton in their listing of industries in Surrey made no reference to the manufacture of gunpowder in Surrey, although it is known the Chilworth mill did not close until 1920.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> W. Malcolm, *Compendium of modern husbandry* 1 (London, C. and R. Baldwin, 1805), p.45.

<sup>143</sup> Malden, *The Victoria county*, p.280.

<sup>144</sup> Malcolm, *Compendium*, p. 46.

<sup>145</sup> Cobbett, *Rural rides*, p.97 and G. Crocker, *A guide to the Chilworth gunpowder mills Surrey* (Surrey Industrial History Group, 1985), also G. Crocker, *Gunpowder Industry* (Aylesbury, Shire Publication, 1999).

<sup>146</sup> Manning and Bray, *History of Surrey* 3 p.12.

<sup>147</sup> Brayley and Britton, *History of Surrey* 5 App. 47.



*Conclusion*

The economy of rural Surrey rested upon the land, with its crops and flocks of sheep. However, the backward and inefficient practices of farmers working on poor soils in the greater part of the county resulted in a depressed state of agriculture. Backward methods of farming affected its profitability and this was only exacerbated by the harsh circumstances of the post-war period. There was only a small traditional landowning presence to encourage and enforce improvement. Increasingly, Surrey attracted landowners who came to own an abundance of large residential properties and estates but who were not dependent on agriculture for an income. It can be seen that only in the north-east of the county with its close proximity to London, was there a thriving market gardening trade. Unemployment of agricultural labourers, low wages and rising poor rates to provide for the increasing numbers of unemployed poor were all common features of Surrey's economic position in the years 1815–1834.

## Chapter Three

### The Operation Of The Poor Law In Surrey

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English poor law legislation codified in the Elizabethan statute of 1601 remained the legal basis of the English Poor Law until 1834. The Act of 1601, which made every parish in England and Wales responsible for the relief of its own poor, stated that the impotent poor were to be assisted and the able bodied poor were to be set to work. In total, 264 general acts and more than 100 local acts were concerned with the administration of poor relief in the years 1601 to 1850.<sup>1</sup> However, as King has pointed out, these acts enabled change rather than demanded it, and it was usual for new acts to amend existing legislation rather than replace or repeal it.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Local administration*

By 1815 England and Wales was covered with a “network of more than 15,000 parishes, each relying on a method of poor relief that in some way, large or small, differed from that of its neighbours.”<sup>3</sup> In Surrey in 1830 there were only three incorporations (Bermondsey<sup>4</sup>, Streatham<sup>5</sup> and Richmond<sup>6</sup>) and three Gilbert Act unions (Ash<sup>7</sup>, Hambledon and Reigate<sup>8</sup>). The poor in the rest of the county were the responsibility of individual parishes. The financial base of the English poor law system was a property tax identified as the parish poor rate. The raising of finance and the day-to-day administration of the poor law were in local hands. Central government played a limited role in the administration of

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<sup>1</sup> J. Innes, ‘Parliament and the shaping of the eighteenth-century English policy’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 40 (1990) 63.

<sup>2</sup> S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850, A regional perspective* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p.18.

<sup>3</sup> P. Dunkley, *The crisis of the old poor law in England 1795–1834* (New York, Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Geo II and 31 Geo III c19.

<sup>5</sup> 30 Geo III c 80.

<sup>6</sup> 25 Geo III c 41.

<sup>7</sup> Ash Union included Normandy, Puttenham, Frimley and Long Sutton.

<sup>8</sup> Reigate included Reigate Borough, Reigate Foreign, Horley, Nutfield and Headley.

poor relief for “the broadly agreed aim of government itself was to provide a basic framework with which civil society could function freely.”<sup>9</sup> Although welfare policies were set at the national level “they were enacted locally where face-to-face negotiation determined their impact.”<sup>10</sup> The parish was the basic unit by which the poor laws were administered, and this chapter will discuss the structure and operation of local government in relation to the Surrey rural parishes.

In the rural South there were few settlements with large populations. Of all the English parishes only 2,487 (17%) had more than 1,000 inhabitants and 9,081(63%) contained fewer than 500.<sup>11</sup> Two-thirds of all the Poor Law authorities in the country were concerned with only a few hundred families and therefore “in such modest communities relationships tended to be immediate and personal”<sup>12</sup> and overseers would be expected to be familiar with the personal circumstances of relief recipients. As Table 3.1 shows, in rural Surrey, of the 107 parishes, 32% were above the national average with over 1000 inhabitants but a further breakdown shows the majority were below 1500 inhabitants:

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<sup>9</sup> A. Kidd, *State society and the poor in nineteenth-century England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999), p.2.

<sup>10</sup> L. Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.7.

<sup>11</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing rural England tradition and transformation in local government 1780–1840* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994), p.31.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

Table 3.1 *Population of Surrey's rural parishes 1831–Total Of 107 Parishes*

Population	Parish Total	%
0–100	3	3
100–500	34	32
500–100	36	33
1000–1500	18	17
1500–2000	8	7
2000–2500	1	1
2500–3000	0	0
3000–3500	2	2
3500–4000	0	0
4000–4500	1	1
4500–5000	3	3
5000–5500	0	0
5500–6000	1	1

Source: Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B. Part 1 XXX pp. 474–89 A B and C Poor Law Commissioners and Parliamentary Returns 1830–31 XI.205.

This clearly shows how immediate and personal parish administration was in most parishes, the parish vestry and its officers would have an immediate and personal relationship with the inhabitants. The parish was responsible for raising money through the rating system and then distributing it to those in need. Each parish had to undertake the care of its own poor, and local traditions and interests shaped its policy.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note the ability of each parish to decide its interpretation of the poor laws, a right that rested on its fiscal autonomy.<sup>14</sup> The parish absorbed over 90% of the money raised through the rates, rising to above 95% when poor relief expenditure reached 'unprecedented levels'.<sup>15</sup> As Hollen Lees has commented "poor laws implied less about levels of poverty that they did about local decisions to fund relief claims."<sup>16</sup> A systematic study of poor law accounts for Surrey clearly indicates that local practice varied, with no

<sup>13</sup> D .A. Baugh, 'The cost of poor relief in south-east England 1790–1834', *The Economic History Review*, 28 (1975) 51.

<sup>14</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p. 32, and D. Eastwood, *Government and community in the English provinces 1700 – 1870* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), pp. 107–11.

<sup>15</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Hollen Less, 'The solidarities', p.7.

single, definitive poor law policy. Each parish had the power to define poverty as it wished, for, as King has pointed out, if local custom did play a part in “shaping perceptions of eligibility, no-one was eligible for relief as of right.”<sup>17</sup> Rather, everyone had to apply to the overseers, who could take many courses of action.<sup>17</sup> Vestry meetings provided a forum for policy-making, and by 1834 it is evident that many vestries in rural Surrey had formalised their procedures; for example, deciding to meet on the first Sunday of every month. Larger vestries tended to take more detailed minutes of their meetings, as in the case of Dorking.<sup>18</sup> Secretaries of smaller vestries were more likely to rely on memory, and their minutes are often extremely brief and uninformative.

### *General vestries*

General vestry meetings, open to all ratepayers, supervised the overseers and assistant overseers and made policy decisions on the management of the poor of the parish. All ratepayers were entitled to attend such meetings and each ratepayer had the right to vote. In many parishes the problem of how to deal with the growing numbers of the unemployed meant that many vestries met on a monthly basis or even more frequently. Inevitably, in some parishes, vestry meetings were not well attended, and ratepayers were always being encouraged to attend on a regular basis. In 1826 the Betchworth vestry considered that if more inhabitants attended the monthly meeting, it would enable the parish to manage its affairs better. It appears that a number of parishioners in Betchworth had complained that they were not prepared to pay from their own pockets for the fire and candles at vestry meetings, so to encourage ratepayers to attend, the vestry allowed *10d* out of the collected rates for candles and a fire at the monthly meetings.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> S. King, ‘Poor relief and English economic development reappraised’, *Economic History Review*, 50 (1997) 362.

<sup>18</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, ‘Dorking Vestry Minute Book 1799–1843’.

<sup>19</sup> SHC P22/5/73, ‘Betchworth vestry minutes 31 March 1826’.

Maclean was also very critical about the working of many vestries. He criticised them for not properly scrutinising paupers requesting relief, claiming that many gatherings had become “a mere meeting of the parish officers for the purpose of making a rate or of approving the accounts” instead of “being a tribunal to which the poorer classes should look for assistance and relief” and where the industrious pauper is separated from the idle and work shy.<sup>20</sup> Some parishes also limited their supervision of the overseers and assistant overseers to auditing their accounts at the end of the year. For example, in May 1833 the vestry at Epsom convened a meeting to revise the pension list, but in the absence of the ratepayers it was impossible to deal with the business. The vestry minutes note with “deep regret that the inhabitants of Epsom should neglect the duty they owe themselves and the poor of the parish on so important an occasion.”<sup>21</sup> Vestry meetings tended only to be well attended when parishes were considering revaluation for rating. On such occasions, ratepayers often packed the event to protest at proposed new valuations. The parish of Dorking held several well attended special vestry meetings in 1830 to consider the poor rate, as many ratepayers “were aggrieved by the present rate.”<sup>22</sup>

Many vestries, on occasion, instigated attempts to cut back the scale of expenditure and reviewed relief lists. In May 1821, the vestry in Frimley issued a notice, telling all families in receipt of parish allowance to attend the church on a designated date “for the inspection of the vestry and those paupers not attending to this order to have their pay stopped.”<sup>23</sup> The list contained the names of twenty-seven families with a total number of 114 children. It was also common practice for some vestries to insist on regular inspection of all those receiving weekly allowances from the parish. In this way, its officers could ascertain the number of children in a family and what its members had earned before setting the rate for their relief. When, in June 1829, the Woking assistant overseer inspected all those

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<sup>20</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 558A.

<sup>21</sup> SHC 3132/2/4, 'Epsom vestry minutes 10 February 1823, 30 March 1832 and 3 May 1833'.

<sup>22</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, 'Dorking vestry minutes 29 January 1830'.

<sup>23</sup> SHC 2589/3/4, 'Frimley vestry minutes 1 May 1821'.

receiving regular relief in the parish, he reported there were fifteen widows and children and forty-three adults, with weekly allowances ranging from 1s 6d to 8s 6d.<sup>24</sup>

### *Parish administrators*

Within each parish or township, officers appointed by ratepayers administered poor relief and until the 1830s the parish vestries and their officials enjoyed a great deal of executive independence. The office of overseer was an annual appointment, compulsory and unpaid. Most Surrey parishes had two overseers, selected by the vestries annually and formally confirmed by the magistrates. Copleston commented that the office of overseer “is essentially one, not of charity, but of prudence and to see that the provisions of the law are carried into effect.”<sup>25</sup> In many parishes two overseers divided the duties of managing the poor between them; they might each take part of the parish or part of the year or conversely one might collect the money and the other pay it out to the needy. In almost every agricultural district farmers or trades people filled the office of overseer. Although overseers had little or no executive experience when appointed, most had gained a knowledge of parish affairs from attendance at vestry meetings. According to Oxley, their main duty was to “keep running a system which had a momentum of its own and in which most problems could be solved by reference to past experience and precedent.”<sup>26</sup>

Overseers often found a range of competing and conflicting restrictions on their actions in administering local poor law policy. It is important to recognise that “administering relief could be fraught with unseen difficulties, and overseers were forced to negotiate undercurrents of conflict between ratepayers and the poor.”<sup>27</sup> After 1815 they had to care for the ever-increasing numbers of unemployed able-bodied, and increasingly provide for

<sup>24</sup> SHC P52/3/45, ‘Woking vestry minutes 21 June 1829’.

<sup>25</sup> E. Copleston, *A second letter to the Right Hon Robert Peel MP for the University of Oxford on the causes of the increase of pauperism and the poor laws*, (London, John Murray, 1819), p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> G. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales 1601–1834*, (Devon, David and Charles, 1974), p. 44.

<sup>27</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p. 39, and ratepayers are dealt with in Chapter Six.

them and their families in winter months and pacify ratepayers concerned at spiralling relief costs.<sup>28</sup> There were many additional onerous tasks for the overseer to undertake: he had to oversee pension payments made to parishioners on a weekly basis, revisit the lists regularly, and decide if the parishioners were still eligible for regular relief. The overseer also dealt with pension payments to out-parishioners and engaged in often lengthy correspondence with other parish overseers. King notes it was usual practice for overseers to pay out parishioners on a quarterly, half yearly or yearly basis, as was the case in Surrey, but the “out-parish relief system was a complex and evolving entity.”<sup>29</sup> At the same time, if newcomers entered the parish, the overseer might have to arrange for their removal and be prepared to organise litigation, which an appeal could produce. In response to the birth of illegitimate children in the parish, the overseer had to obtain bonds from or affiliation orders against the putative father and collect the monies due. This process could be long and drawn out and, as Maclean pointed out in his report, every parish officer he interviewed “complains of the difficulty of enforcing the present law, time is wasted and trouble and expense are incurred; the arrears due are seldom recovered.”<sup>30</sup>

### *The need for greater efficiency*

Parishes had different “levels of professionalisation in their poor law administration.”<sup>31</sup> This resulted in varying degrees of administrative competence, and by the early nineteenth century increased problems of managing the poor forced vestries to inaugurate policy reforms. Increasingly, overseers were determined to control poor relief expenditure carefully and to keep costs to a minimum. In 1821 the parish of St Nicholas Guildford decided to supplement the two overseers (one for the town and one for the Artington division) with two “junior overseers”, charged with collecting the rates in their respective

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.39–40

<sup>29</sup> S. King, “It is impossible for our vestry to judge his case into perfection from here” Managing the distance dimensions of poor relief’ *Rural History*, 16 (2005) 183.

<sup>30</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p.540A.

<sup>31</sup> King, “It is impossible”, 163



divisions and paying the paupers, under the direction of the “senior overseers.”<sup>32</sup> Across the country many urban parishes had appointed assistant overseers in the eighteenth century but the practice did not spread to rural parishes on any scale until the early nineteenth century. Majendie commented on Surrey in 1834 that, “the duties of an overseer are now so onerous” that some parishes have appointed paid deputies.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, before 1819 overseers personally chose their deputies and many have gone unrecorded. We are only aware of their existence in Surrey when they have been recorded in vestry minutes, but before 1819 vestries were not obliged by law to keep minutes of their meetings. The large parish of Dorking (see Table 3.18) did keep a minute book and in November 1817 appointed a salaried full time deputy to serve on behalf of the overseers. Thomas Dewdney received a salary of £45 per annum with an additional sum of £25 at the end of each year “if he shall have executed the duties of his office to the satisfaction of the committee.”<sup>34</sup> The 1817 Select Committee on the Poor Laws had recommended the appointment of assistant overseers and the Sturges–Bourne Acts of 1819 gave parishes the legal power to hire paid assistant overseers. In the period 1819–34, as Table 3.2 shows, apart from a decrease in 1824–25 and a slight decrease in 1831–32, the number of paid assistant overseers in Surrey increased on a yearly basis.

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<sup>32</sup> SHC GUN/8/2, ‘St Nicholas Guildford Vestry Minutes 15 April 1821’.

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey A. Majendie 167A .

<sup>34</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, ‘Part 1 Dorking Vestry Minutes November 1817’.

Table 3.2 *Appointment of Assistant Overseers in Surrey 1815–1834*

DATE	ASSISTANT OVERSEERS
1819–1820	19
1820–1821	20
1821–1822	23
1822–1823	27
1823–1824	27
1824–1825	20
1825–1826	32
1826–1827	32
1827–1828	32
1828–1829	37
1829–1830	37
1830–1831	40
1831–1832	39
1832–1833	39
1833–1834	39

Source: Amount of Monies expended for relief Abstract of the Poor 1818 XIX (82), Return on Poor relief 1830/1 xi (52), Return on Poor Relief 1831/2 xlv (216), Abstract Returns 1833 xxxii(32) and Abstract Returns 1835 xlvii (284) .

In 1833–1834 the number of assistant overseers in Surrey had risen to 39, out of a national total of 3,376. It is possible from returns to identify certain parishes that had appointed paid assistant overseers but these returns are not always complete.<sup>35</sup> For example, the parish of Egham did not reply to this question but the vestry minutes record the appointment of Moses Duck as assistant overseer.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, surviving vestry records also indicate the presence of assistant overseers. In 1831 Betchworth paid Mr Ivory £20 per annum as assistant overseer.<sup>37</sup> Two years later a meeting of the churchwardens and ratepayers at Shere decided that the growing number of paupers had made the duties of the overseers so time-consuming that the parish should appoint an assistant at a salary not exceeding forty pounds per annum. Proposers pointed out that as “several daring and felonious outrages are constantly committed, the perpetrators of which

<sup>35</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 32, Reply Great Bookham p.476c, Reply Chobham p. 477c, Reply Farnham p.480c, Reply Godstone p. 481c, Reply Limpsfield p. 483c, Reply Wallington Hamlet p. 488c.

<sup>36</sup> It must be noted not all parishes made a Return to the Poor Law Commissioners, Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 32, Reply Egham (blank) p. 479c.

<sup>37</sup> SHC P22/5/73, ‘Vestry minutes Betchworth 15 April 1831’.

escape detection, it was hoped the assistant overseer would be able to detect the offenders.”<sup>38</sup>

Appointment of deputy overseers seems to have occurred when parishes recognised the need for greater professionalism to execute the routine business of parish government. Majendie saw the appointment of assistant overseers as “one of the greatest improvements in the poor laws which has been introduced in modern times” because assistant overseers had a knowledge of parochial law, accountancy and time to deal with pauper demands.<sup>39</sup> Maclean, in his report, also supported the appointment of assistant overseers, finding them, “very intelligent, zealous...and economical to a parish.”<sup>40</sup> The parishes of Chobham and Lingfield saw the appointment, as beneficial to the parish, and Great Bookham reported, since the appointment of an assistant overseer the rates had been “lowered.”<sup>41</sup> As Eastwood has noted, instituting a system of salaried officers changed the character of parish government. In parishes with assistant overseers, the routine financial management passed from elected overseers to the appointed assistant overseer and now for the first time “it was becoming possible to make a career in parish administration. Thus the age of the professional was in sight” and salaried parish offices were able to devote themselves to parish administration.<sup>42</sup>

In rural Surrey the assistant overseer commonly acted as the vestry clerk, rate collector, book-keeper and cashier, but we rely on surviving parish accounts for this information. However, in some large parishes the vestry clerk was a separate appointment, and an able clerk could enhance the efficient management of parish affairs. Some vestries, on

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<sup>38</sup> SHC1956/1/15, ‘Vestry Minutes Shere outrages 4 April 1833’.

<sup>39</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 168A.

<sup>40</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 556A.

<sup>41</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 32, Reply Chobham p.477c, Reply Lingfield p.484c and Great Bookham p. 476c.

<sup>42</sup> Eastwood, *Government and community*, p.46.

the appointment of an assistant overseer, produced a list of his duties. In November 1817 the Dorking vestry required the assistant overseer to have a comprehensive knowledge of all poor families in receipt of relief, together with the ages of the respective children and knowledge of any monies earned by the families. It also expected the assistant overseer to attend the parish workhouse on a weekly basis and produce written reports on the state of the poor for presentation to the meetings of the monthly vestry.<sup>43</sup> The vestry of Egham also issued a list of duties for their assistant overseer, Moses Duck. They were very similar to those drawn up by Dorking but they also insisted that he keep good records of income and expenditure that he alone was to disburse money for relief of the poor in the parish, and that he pay all bills against the parish on a regular monthly basis.<sup>44</sup> The parish of Frimley appointed George Cobbett as assistant overseer in April 1822, at a salary of £30 per annum. The parish was so impressed with Cobbett's efficient management of parish affairs that in August 1825 it increased his salary to £50 per annum, and he was given the additional tasks of collecting church rates and the highway rates as well as acting as vestry clerk. In April 1827 the parish rewarded Cobbett with a £10 remuneration for the extra services he had carried out on behalf of the parish. Two years later he received a further £20 "for the general reduction made by the assistant overseer in the poor rate and good management of the poor." The parish continued to pay George Cobbett a further £20 for the next two years in gratitude for efficient management of parish business.<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that the expenditure on poor relief in Frimley parish for the years 1828–1830 were the lowest since 1815. In those years George Cobbett had reduced the expenditure by approximately 19%,<sup>46</sup> no mean feat, as the assistant overseer not only had to maintain the system of relief but at the same time (and importantly for the

<sup>43</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, 'Part 1 Dorking vestry minutes November 1817'.

<sup>44</sup> SHC 2516/6/2, 'Egham vestry minutes 19 April 1823'.

<sup>45</sup> SHC 2589/3/4, 'Frimley Minute Book 18 April 1822, 7 August 1825, 27 April 1827, 17 April 1829, 6 April 1830 and 1 April 1831'.

<sup>46</sup> Amount of Monies expended for relief Abstract of the Poor 1818 XIX (82), Return on Poor relief 1830/1 xi (52), Return on Poor Relief 1831/2 xlv (216), Abstract Returns 1833 xxxii(32) and Abstract Returns 1835 xlvii (284) Returns by the parish of Frimley for 1815–1834.

ratepayers) he had to balance the books at the end of the year, which often was impossible to achieve.

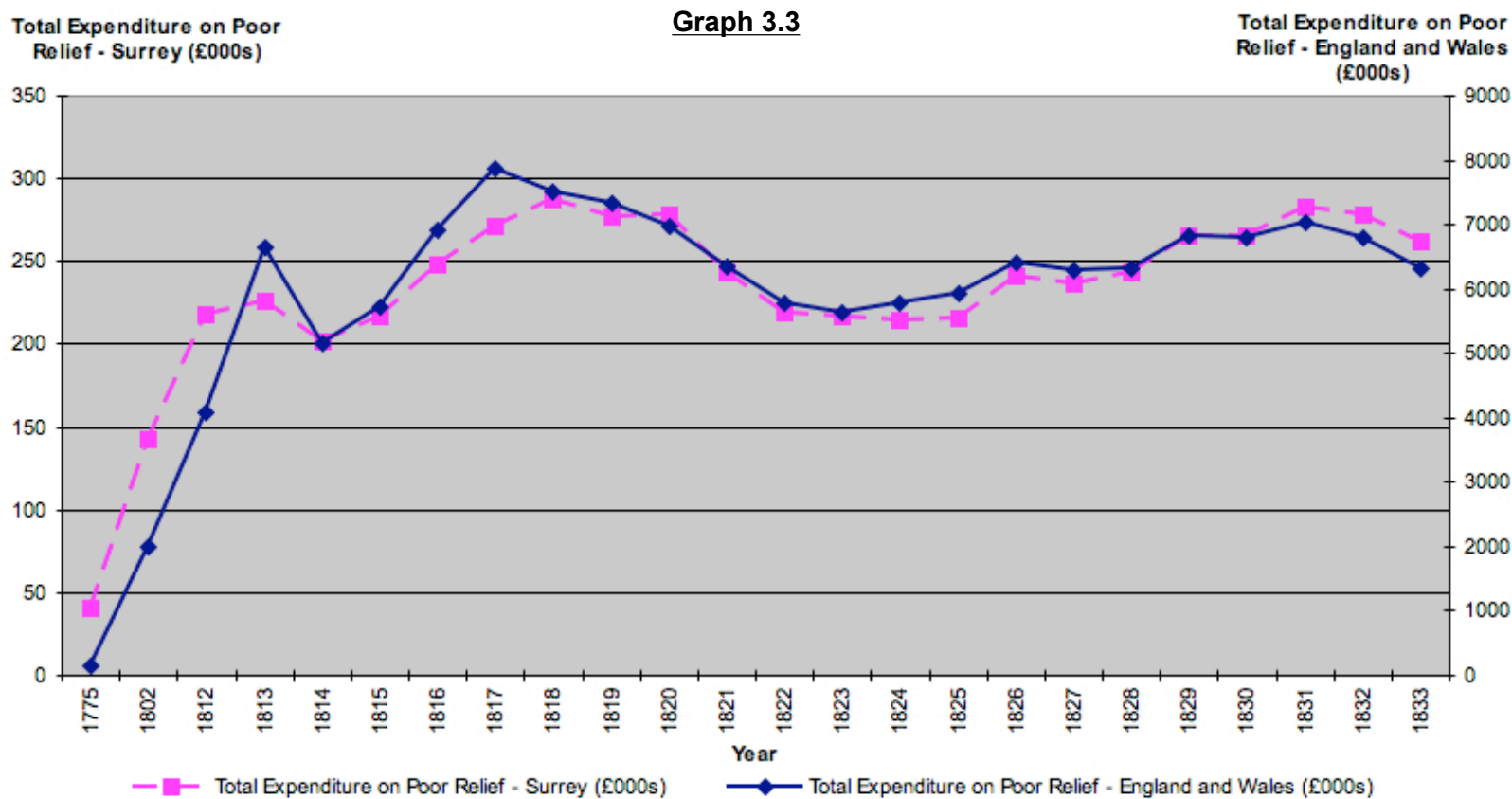
### *Rising costs*

By the early nineteenth century many contemporaries regarded the poor law system as “profligate and extravagant.”<sup>47</sup> Contemporaries constantly complained of the unprecedented rise in poor relief costs prior to 1818 (see Graph 3.3). The escalating costs meant spiralling expenditure; the figures for poor relief in England and Wales show a threefold increase in spending between 1775 and 1812. The post war period (1815–22) witnessed the cost of relief again surging ahead. The agricultural depression of 1814–22 caused severe difficulties for many parishes, as high prices combined with rising unemployment pushed up poor rates. Intensified rural poverty is reflected regionally in Surrey by the sustained high relief costs, despite annual fluctuations throughout the 1820s and beyond. There was a comparatively modest reduction in spending for the period after 1818, both nationally and in Surrey. Figures of *per capita* expenditure confirm that nationally, after a rapid fall in the early 1820s, spending stabilised at almost double pre-war levels and even began to rise again as the economy stagnated after 1825 (see Graph 3.4).

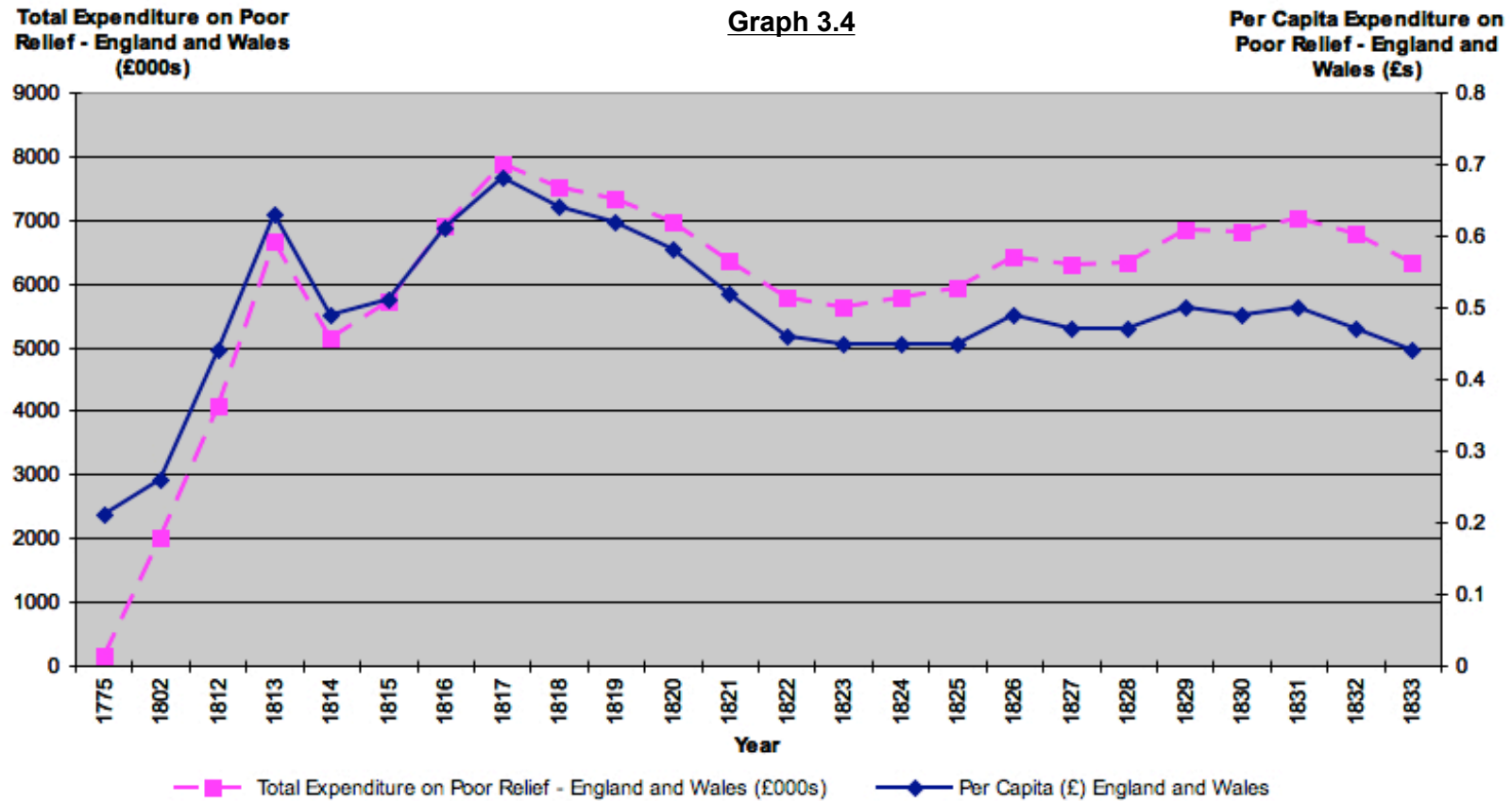
The statistics for Surrey do not mirror the national picture exactly, but the upward trend is similar and matches the fluctuations in expenditure (see Graph 3.5). Surrey does not show such a rapid fall in expenditure in the early 1820s and spending only stabilised for the two year period between 1827–1829 before increasing again in the financial year 1829–1830. In *per capita* terms, spending in Surrey was above the national average (see Graph 3.6).

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<sup>47</sup> M.A. Lyle, ‘Regionality in the late old poor law: the treatment of chargeable bastards from Rural Queries’, *Agricultural History Review*, 53 (2005) 141.

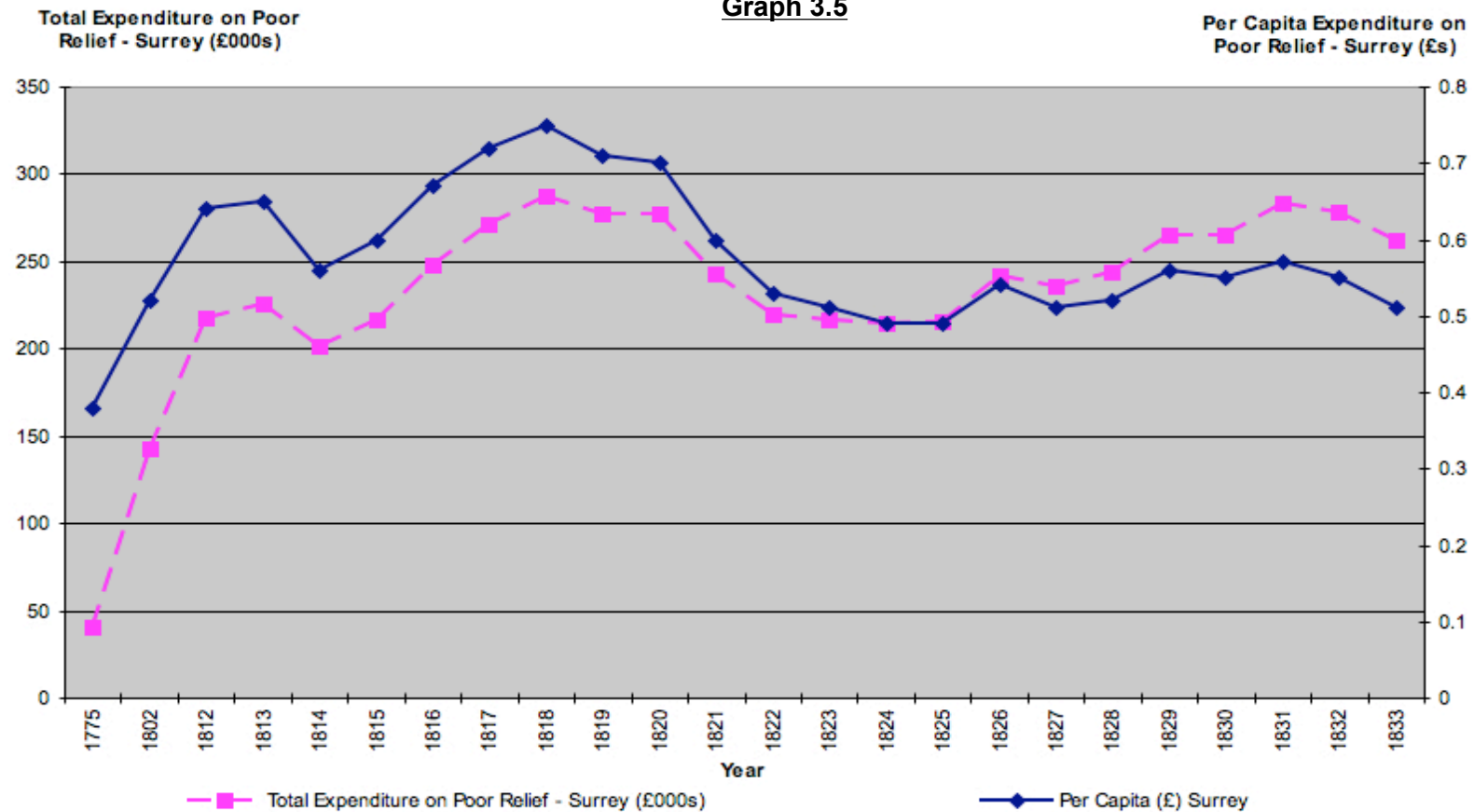


Abstract of the Returns 1776 – 1777 House of Commons Session Papers: County Report No 3265(Accounts relating to Poor Rates PP 1830-1, xi(52) 208-209;PP 1830-1 xi(219) 202-3;PP1831-2 xlv(216) 450 –1 Poor rates Abstract returns PP 1833 xxxii(32) 349 –350; PP 1834 xliii(355) 402-3; Abstract of Returns PP 1835 xlvii (284) 453-54 ; Population from Mitchell *Abstract 20*; Deane and Cole *British Economic Growth* 103, 108-9;  
The annual rate of population increase inter-censual years was assumed as constant



Abstract of the Returns 1776 – 1777 House of Commons Session Papers: County Report No 3265(Accounts relating to Poor Rates PP 1830-1, xi(52) 208-209; PP 1830-1 xi(219) 202-3; PP 1831-2 xlv(216) 450 – 1 Poor rates Abstract returns PP 1833 xxxii(32) 349 – 350; PP 1834 xliii(355) 402-3; Abstract of Returns PP 1835 xlvii (284) 453-54 ; Population from Mitchell *Abstract 20*; Deane and Cole *British Economic Growth* 103, 108-9;  
 The annual rate of population increase inter-censual years was assumed as constant

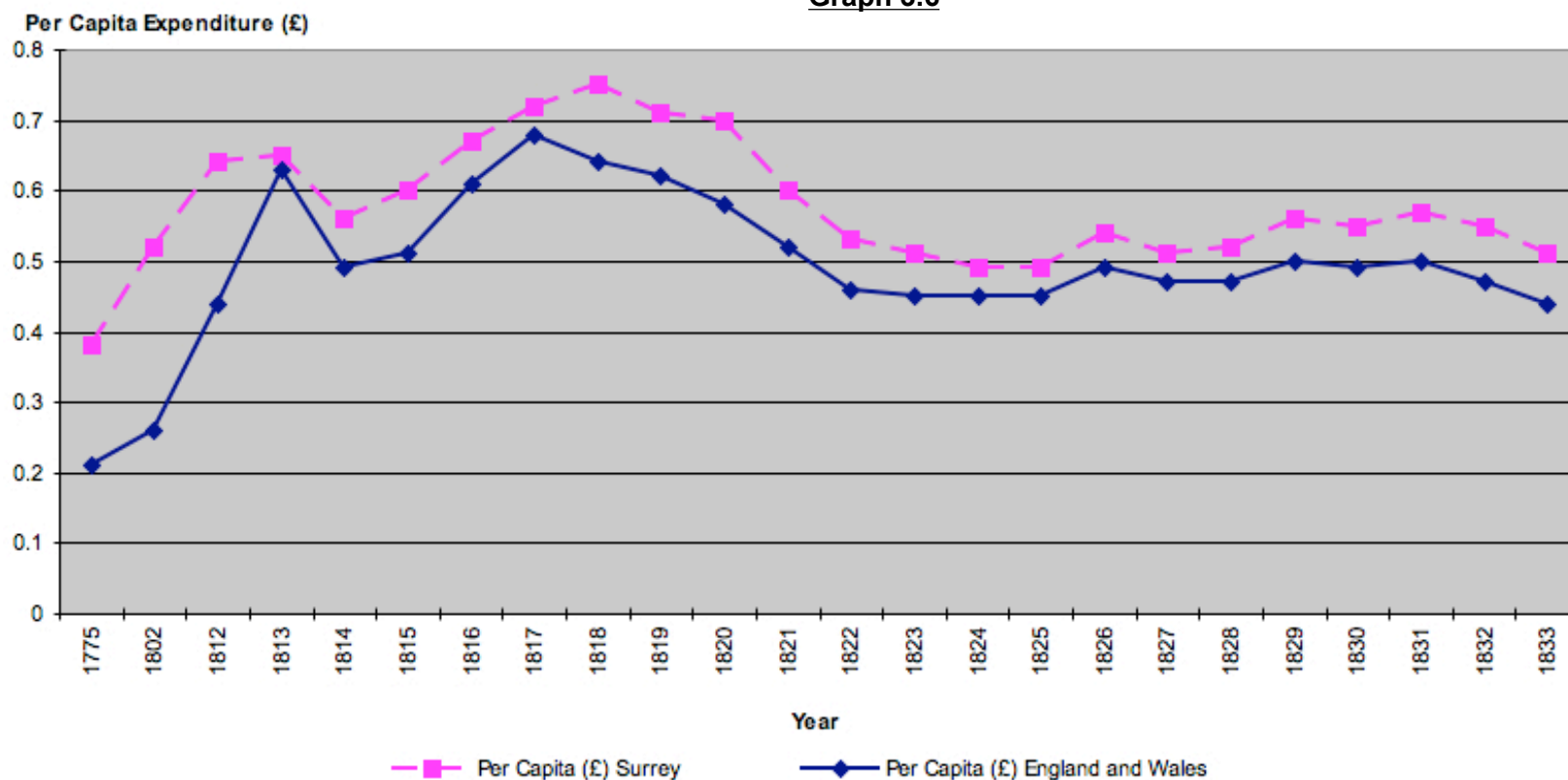
Graph 3.5



Abstract of the Returns 1776 – 1777 House of Commons Session Papers: County Report No 3265(Accounts relating to Poor Rates PP 1830-1, xi(52) 208-209;PP 1830-1 xi(219) 202-3;PP1831-2 xlv(216) 450 –1 Poor rates Abstract returns PP 1833 xxxii(32) 349 –350; PP 1834 xliii(355) 402-3; Abstract of Returns PP 1835 xlvii (284) 453-54 ; Population from Mitchell *Abstract* 20; Deane and Cole *British Economic Growth* 103, 108-9;

The annual rate of population increase inter-censual years was assumed as constant



**Graph 3.6**

Abstract of the Returns 1776 – 1777 House of Commons Session Papers: County Report No 3265(Accounts relating to Poor Rates PP 1830-1, xi(52) 208-209;PP 1830-1 xi(219) 202-3;PP1831-2 xlv(216) 450 –1 Poor rates Abstract returns PP 1833 xxxii(32) 349 –350; PP 1834 xliii(355) 402-3; Abstract of Returns PP 1835 xlvii (284) 453-54 ; Population from Mitchell *Abstract 20*; Deane and Cole *British Economic Growth* 103, 108-9;  
The annual rate of population increase inter-censual years was assumed as constant

In relation to other counties, Surrey was twentieth in order of relief expenditure per head of population for the year ending 25<sup>th</sup> March 1822. This is (see Table 3.7) in line with Caird's north–south division of England which revealed that *per capita* expenditure on the poor in the south of England outstripped that of the north in the period before 1834 by anywhere between 80 and 100 per cent.<sup>48</sup>

Table 3.7 *County order of relief 1822*

Position	County	Position	County
1	Sussex	21	Rutland
2	Northamptonshire	22	Middlesex
3	Buckinghamshire	23	Warwickshire
4	Essex	24	Westmorland
5	Kent	25	East Riding
6	Oxfordshire	26	Devonshire
7	Suffolk	27	Durham
8	Bedfordshire	28	Gloucestershire
9	Huntingdonshire	29	Shropshire
10	Berkshire	30	Worcestershire
11	Norfolk	31	North Riding
12	Cambridgeshire	32	Cheshire
13	Leicestershire	33	Cornwall
14	Wiltshire	34	Derbyshire
15	Hertfordshire	35	Northumberland
16	Hampshire	36	Nottinghamshire
17	Dorsetshire	37	Somersetshire
18	Herefordshire	38	Staffordshire
19	Lincolnshire	39	Cumberland
<b>20</b>	<b>Surrey</b>	40	West Riding
		41	Lancashire

Source: Report of the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns 1823, V App.D2 p.14.

<sup>48</sup> J.P. Huzel, 'Labourer and the poor law 1750–1850', in G. E. Mingay (ed), *The agrarian history of England and Wales* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 762, and King, *Poverty*, pp.83–6.

It has also been noted by King that relief policies adopted by vestries of the northern and western parishes were harsh in comparison with their southern and eastern counterparts.<sup>49</sup>

The Speenhamland system did not operate in Surrey, but there were high levels of spending on poor relief, confirming Blaug's assertion that economic circumstances independent of the allowance system was the primary cause of high poor rates in depressed agricultural areas.<sup>50</sup> Huzel noted a similar picture in Kent, and Digby and Baugh in their research also noted high levels of poor expenditure.<sup>51</sup> Published statistics indicate that the rapid and sustained increase in the cost of relief in Surrey was in line with national trends. An increase in spending did occur during the war, similarly followed by a small reduction between the years 1821–1826. Figures for *per capita* expenditure show that after a fall in the first half of the 1820s spending stabilised at almost 50% higher than that of pre-war levels (see Table 3.8). It is also interesting to note there was an increase in poor relief expenditure immediately after the Swing Riots of 1830.

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<sup>49</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.262.

<sup>50</sup> Blaug, 'The myth', 151–184.

<sup>51</sup> J.Huzel, 'Demographic impact of the old poor law: more reflexions on Malthus', *Economic History Review*, 33 (1980) 375–81, and A. Digby, *Pauper palaces: the economy and poor law of nineteenth century Norfolk* (London, Routledge, 1978), pp.121–2 and S. Williams, 'Poor relief, labourers' households and living standards in rural England c. 1770 - 1834: a Bedfordshire case study', *Economic History review*, 58,(2005) 485–519, also Baugh, 'The cost', 50–68.

Table 3.8 *Expenditure on poor relief 1777–1834*

SURREY ----- ENGLAND AND WALES -----

Year Ending Easter#	Total Expenditure On Poor Relief In Surrey (£000)	Per Capita (£)	Amount Paid In Poor Relief In England and Wales (£000)	Per Capita (£)
1775–1776	£40.6	0.38	£1503.8	0.21
1802–1803	£142.4	0.52	£2004.2	0.26
1812–1813	£217.8	0.64	£4077.9	0.44
1813–1814	£225.7	0.65	£6656.1	0.63
1814–1815	£201.6	0.56	£5148.8	0.49
1815–1816	£216.7	0.60	£5724.8	0.51
1816–1817	£247.7	0.67	£6910.9	0.61
1817–1818	£271.1	0.72	£7870.8	0.68
1818–1819	£287.5	0.75	£7516.7	0.64
1819–1820	£277.2	0.71	£7330.3	0.62
1820–1821	£277.6	0.70	£6959.3	0.58
1821–1822	£242.9	0.60	£6358.7	0.52
1822–1823	£219.2	0.53	£5773.0	0.46
1823–1824	£216.2	0.51	£5637.9	0.45
1824–1825	£214.2	0.49	£5787.0	0.45
1825–1826	£215.6	0.49	£5928.5	0.45
1826–1827	£241.6	0.54	£6411.1	0.49
1827–1828	£236.1	0.51	£6298.0	0.47
1828–1829	£243.4	0.52	£6332.4	0.47
1829–1830	£265.5	0.56	£6829.0	0.50
1830–1831	£265.4	0.55	£6798.9	0.49
1831–1832	£283.3	0.57	£7037.0	0.50
1832–1833	£278.4	0.55	£6790.8	0.47
1833–1834	£261.5	0.51	£6317.3	0.44

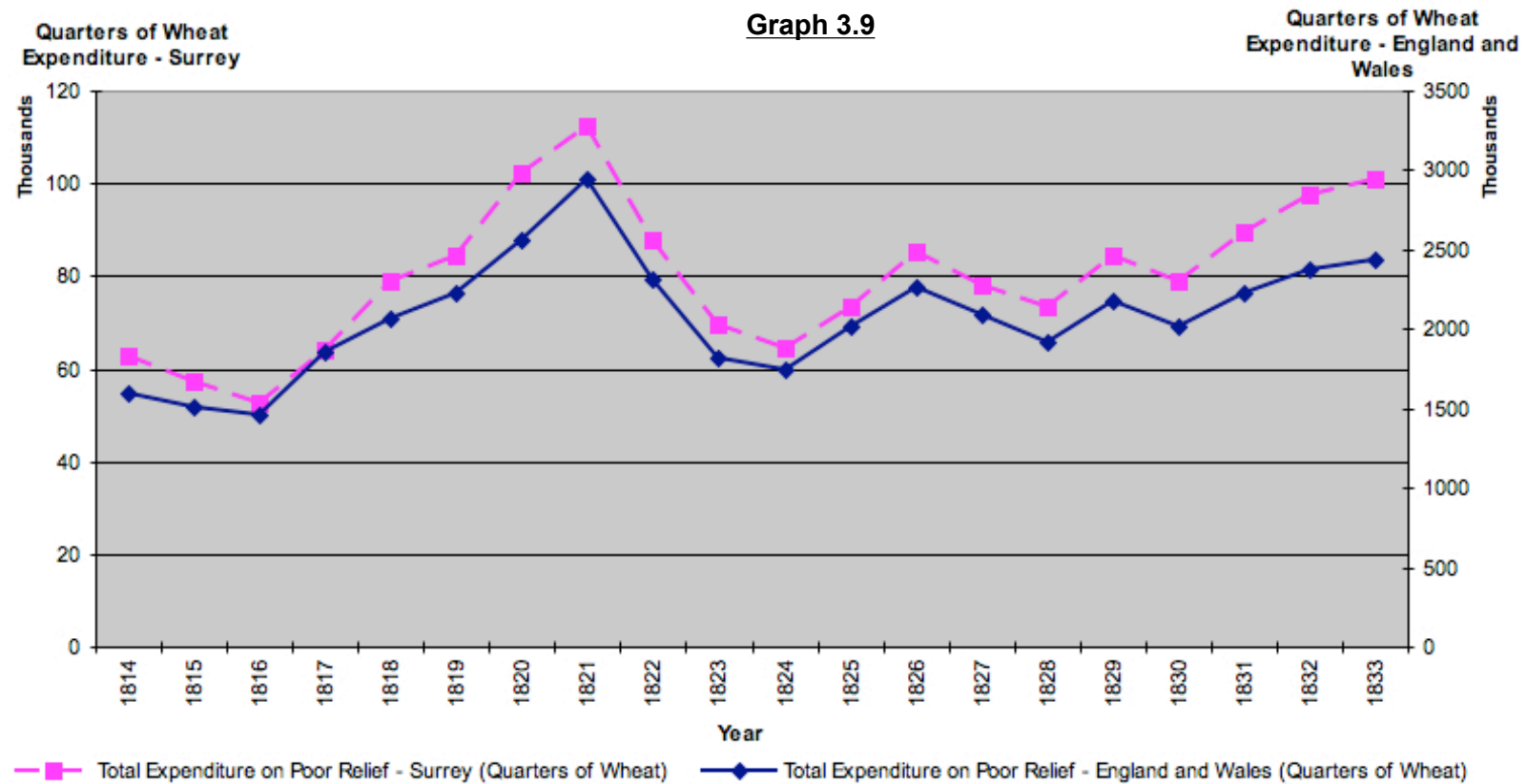
# Figures for 1776–1814 are to year-end Easter thereafter year-end 25<sup>th</sup> March

Source: Amount of Monies Expended for the Relief of the Poor in Surrey:

Abstract of the Returns 1776–1777 House of Commons Session Papers: County Report No 3265 Accounts relating to Poor Rates PP 1830–1, xi (52) 208–209; PP 1830–1 xi (219) 202–3; PP1831–2 xlv (216) 450–1 Poor rates Abstract returns PP 1833 xxxii (32) 349–350; PP 1834 xliii (355) 402–3; Abstract of Returns 1835 xlvii (284) 453–54. Population from Mitchell *Abstract* 20; Deane and Cole *British Economic Growth* 103, 108–9; Surrey figures. (The annual rate of population increase inter-censal years was assumed as constant)

Gross relief expenditure figures mask the fact that both pension payments and payments in kind were influenced by fluctuations in prices. To try to establish real relief costs, Baugh took bread prices and divided gross relief by an index of the price of wheat, as a measure of the purchasing power of relief <sup>52</sup> (see Graph 3.9). This was done in order to try to eliminate that portion of increasing expenditure which was a result of rising population, and to establish the equation of the proportion of paupers to total population as a constant.

<sup>52</sup> Baugh, 'The cost' 56–8.



Abstract of the Returns 1776 – 1777 House of Commons Session Papers: County Report No 3265(Accounts relating to Poor Rates PP 1830-1, xi(52) 208-209; PP 1830-1 xi(219) 202-3; PP 1831-2 xlv(216) 450 –1 Poor rates Abstract returns PP 1833 xxxii(32) 349 –350; PP 1834 xliii(355) 402-3; Abstract of Returns PP 1835 xlvii (284) 453-54 ; Population from Mitchell *Abstract 20*; Deane and Cole *British Economic Growth* 103, 108-9;

The annual rate of population increase inter-censual years was assumed as constant

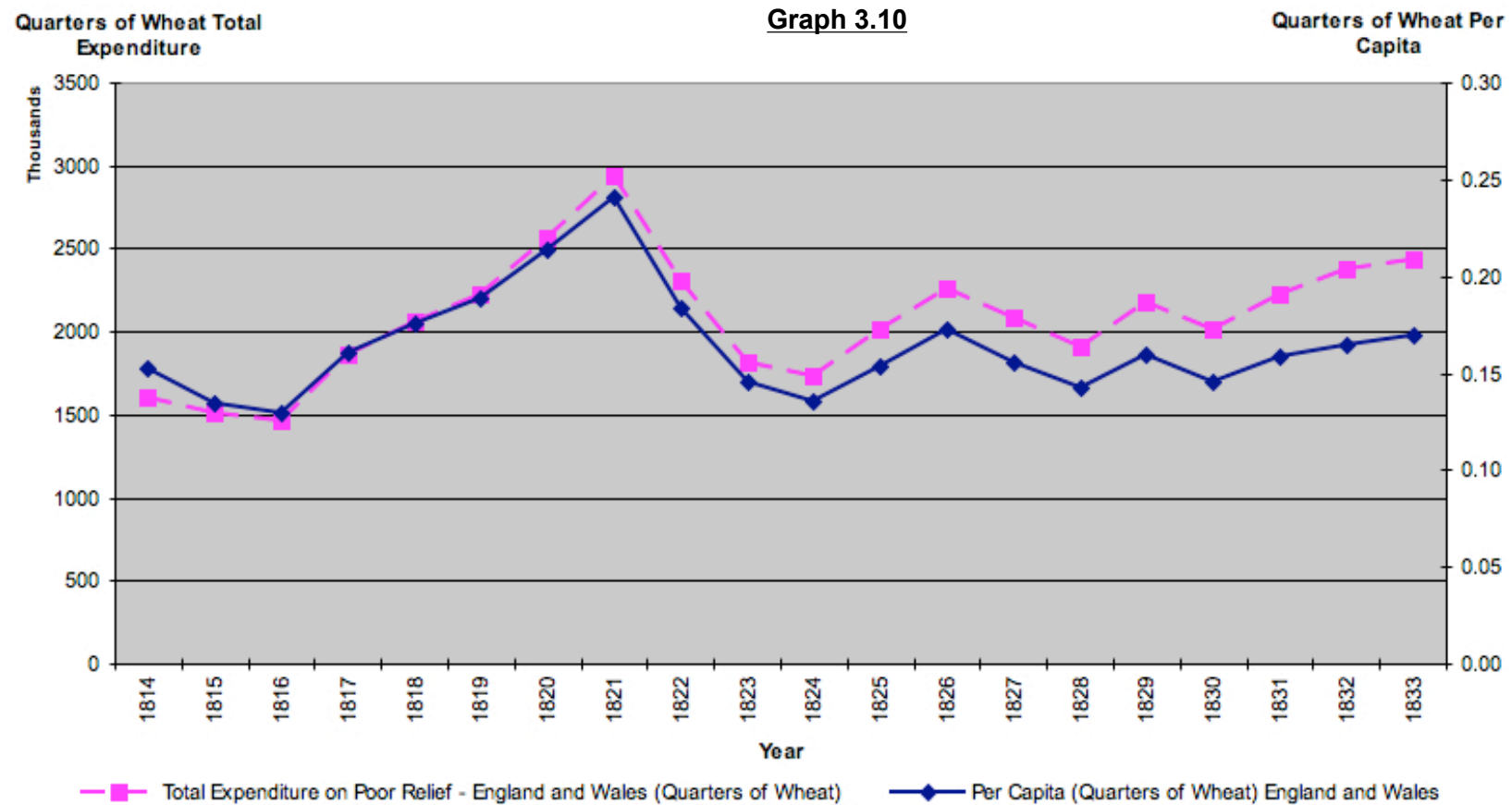
Poor law spending *per capita*, and the amount of wheat in quarters it would buy nearly doubled between 1750 and 1803, and reached a high point in absolute and *per capita* terms in 1818, as is shown in Graph 3.10.<sup>53</sup> Real expenditure tended to rise in response to shortages and high prices but the decrease in the level of poor relief did not reflect falling prices in the same way. Graph 3.11 also shows for Surrey relief spending in *per capita* terms in relation to wheat prices. As Eastwood observed “given the wide oscillations in prices during this period, it is useful to obtain an index of the real value of relief.”<sup>54</sup> Both nationally and in Surrey, real expenditure tended to rise in line with shortage and high prices of wheat, and levels of poor relief dropped in line with falling prices but expenditure always remained higher than wheat prices. It can also be seen that in the years after 1830 the differential between expenditure on poor relief and quarters of wheat increased. It is evident that between 1815 and 1822 the average expenditure on relief reached 1789 quarters of wheat, an increase of 35.6% on the wartime average of 1316 quarters, and 112.8% on the pre-war average of 839 quarters.<sup>55</sup> Between 1821–24 real expenditure fell, but rose again during the period 1824–26 to an average of 2037 quarters. Clearly this illustrates that the agricultural depression of 1814–22, which resulted in high prices and rising unemployment, placed a great strain on ratepayers to provide for the paupers of the parish. For a complete breakdown of Surrey parish population and poor relief expenditure (see Table 3.12 and 3.13).

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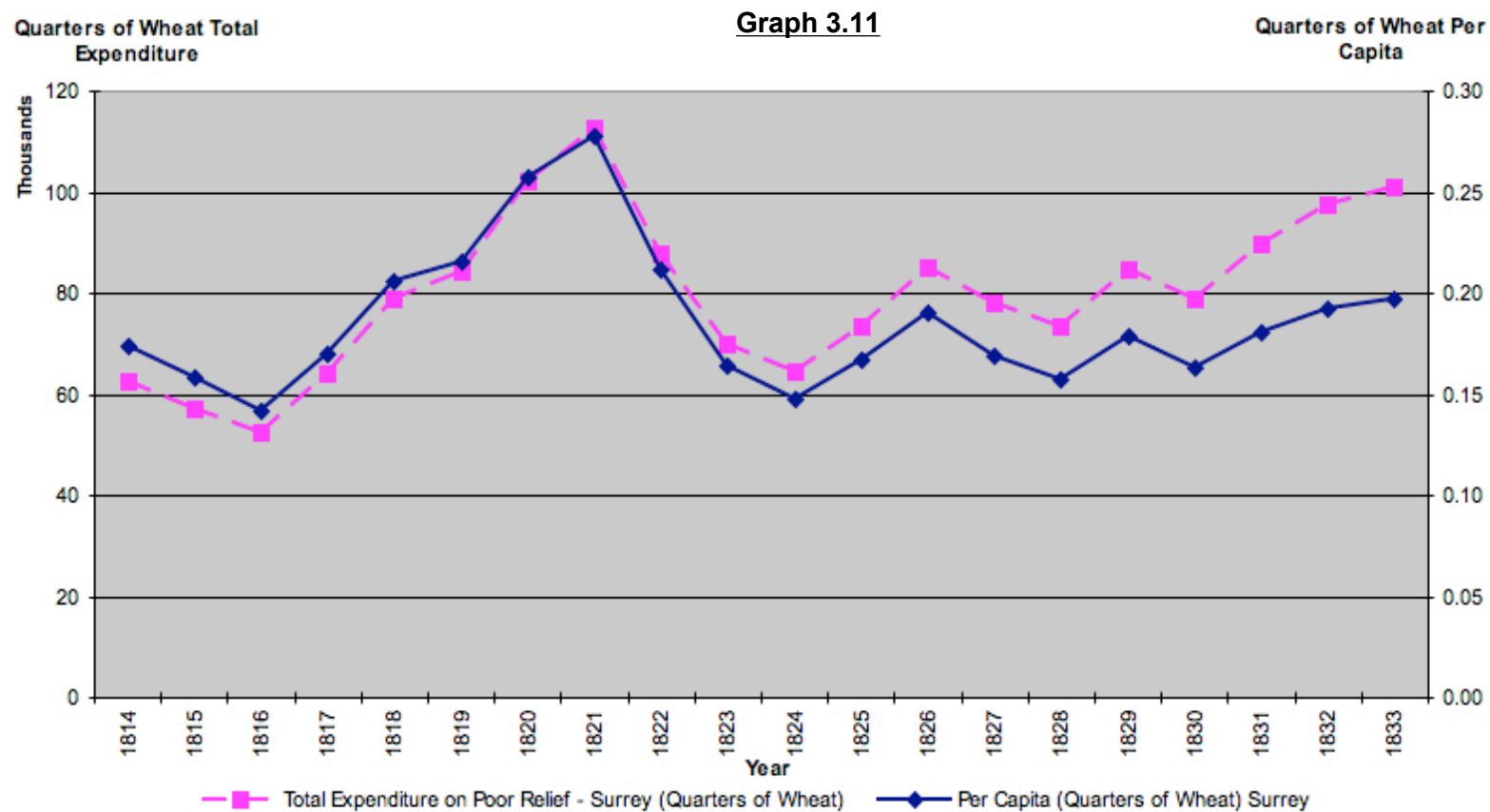
<sup>53</sup> Huzel, ‘The labourer’, pp.760–2.

<sup>54</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural England* p.136.

<sup>55</sup> G. Boyer, *An economic history of the English poor law 1750–1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.139–42.



Abstract of the Returns 1776 – 1777 House of Commons Session Papers: County Report No 3265(Accounts relating to Poor Rates PP 1830-1, xi(52) 208-209; PP 1830-1 xi(219) 202-3; PP 1831-2 xlv(216) 450 –1 Poor rates Abstract returns PP 1833 xxxii(32) 349 –350; PP 1834 xliii(355) 402-3; Abstract of Returns PP 1835 xlvii (284) 453-54 ; Population from Mitchell *Abstract 20*; Deane and Cole *British Economic Growth* 103, 108-9;  
The annual rate of population increase inter-censual years was assumed as constant



Abstract of the Returns 1776 – 1777 House of Commons Session Papers: County Report No 3265(Accounts relating to Poor Rates PP 1830-1, xi(52) 208-209; PP 1830-1 xi(219) 202-3; PP 1831-2 xlv(216) 450 –1 Poor rates Abstract returns PP 1833 xxxii(32) 349 –350; PP 1834 xliii(355) 402-3; Abstract of Returns PP 1835 xlvii (284) 453-54 ; Population from Mitchell *Abstract 20*; Deane and Cole *British Economic Growth* 103, 108-9;  
 The annual rate of population increase inter-censual years was assumed as constant



Table 3.12 Breakdown of poor relief spending by parish and population figures 1801–1833 from the Rural Queries

Parish	Property Tax Amount Of The Estimate of The Annual Value Of the Real Property as Assessed April 1815	Population 1801	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1802–3	Amount Per Head 1802–3	Population 1811	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1811	Amount Per Head 1811	Population 1821	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1821	Amount Per Head 1821	Population 1831	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1831	Amount Per Head 1831
Abinger	3152	632	£572	0.91	629	£863	£1.37	742	£955	£1.29	767	£461	0.60
Albury	3241	510	£409	0.80	589	£721	£1.22	765	£863	£1.13	929	£748	0.81
Bletchingley	6770	1344	£964	0.72	1116	£1992	£1.78	1187	£1229	£1.04	1203	£1378	£1.15
East Clandon	1203	260	£108	0.42	228	£169	0.74	230	£158	0.69	281	£89	0.32
Crowhurst	1865	186	£230	£1.24	194	£448	£2.31	214	£253	£1.18	212	£309	£1.46
Egham	10761	2190	£2119	0.97	2823	£2996	£1.06	3316	£1987	0.60	4203	£1611	0.38
Great Bookham	2867	587	£577	0.98	606	£957	£1.58	732	£928	£1.27	890	£532	0.60
Buckland	2366	269	£564	£2.10	287	£493	£1.72	292	£503	£1.72	344	£418	£1.22
Chobham	6598	1176	£697	0.59	1329	£1015	0.76	1719	£924	0.54	1937	£924	0.47
Cobham	7094	1200	£929	0.77	1275	£1037	0.81	1340	£1059	0.79	1422	£870	0.61
Ewhurst	3402	644	£681	£1.06	706	£1013	£1.43	821	£915	£1.11	828	£1092	£1.32
Farnham	20991	4321	£3157	0.73	4701	£4306	0.92	5413	£4635	0.86	5858	£4716	0.81
Godstone	7475	1081	£1041	0.96	1156	£1725	£1.49	1210	£1830	£1.51	1397	£1436	£1.02
Guildford St Mary and Holy Trinity	7054	2153	£1124	0.52	2423	£1170	0.48	2444	£1712	0.70	3070	£1125	0.37
Guildford St Nicholas	805	481	£527	£1.10	551	£1546	£2.81	717	£1309	£1.83	846	£967	£1.14
Haslemere	1830	642	£288	0.45	756	£895	£1.18	887	£937	£1.06	849	£825	0.97
Horley	6421	871	£825	0.95	942	£1093	£1.16	1063	£1098	£1.03	1164	£1091	0.93
Limpsfield	3988	727	£515	0.71	746	£1113	£1.49	918	£867	0.94	1042	£459	0.44
Lingfield	7072	1387	£1207	0.87	1490	£2617	£1.76	1684	£2424	£1.44	1814	£1949	£1.07
Merrow	1408	169	£62	0.37	181	£150	0.83	240	£267	£1.11	249	£205	0.82
Merstham	3568	481	£492	£1.02	663	£579	0.87	796	£478	0.60	713	£415	0.58
Mitcham	13549	3466	£2065	0.60	4175	£4194	£1	4453	£3450	0.77	4387	£3974	0.91
Newdigate	1416	445	£823	£1.85	447	£601	£1.34	579	£634	£1.09	519	£613	£1.18
Oxted	5242	644	£515	0.80	754	£1184	£1.57	777	£664	0.85	959	£589	0.61
Send and Ripley	7514	1024	£766	0.25	1090	£976	0.90	1283	£1317	£1.03	1483	£1306	0.88
Wallington		793	£570	0.72	804	£320	0.40	847	£676	0.80	933	£1122	£1.20

Completed figures Queries A B and C Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries Parliamentary Papers 1834 Vol XXX p.474 – 488

Table 3.13 Breakdown of poor relief spending by parish and population figures 1801–1831 from parish returns

Parish	Property Tax Amount Of The Estimate Of The Annual Value Of the Real Property as Assessed April 1815	Population 1801	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1802–3	Amount Per Head 1802–3	Population 1811	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1811	Amount Per Head 1811	Population 1821	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1821	Amount Per Head 1821	Population 1831	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1831	Amount Per Head 1831
Cranleigh	5,721	1090	£1106	£1.01	1009	No central gov. figures published	No central gov. figures published	1182	£1380	£1.17	1320	£1310	0.99
Shere	4157	871	£544	0.62	918			1077	£1311	£1.22	1190	£1384	£1.16
Alford	1225	306	£224	0.73	364			470	£498	£1.06	514	£531	£1.03
Bramley	3926	657	£500	0.76	629			707	£872	£1.23	842	£918	£1.09
Dunsfold	2548	549	£300	0.55	518			578	£883	£1.53	567	£682	£1.20
Hascombe	1398	225	£162	0.72	264			253	£314	£1.24	317	£321	£1.01
St Martha	1490	112	£76	0.68	166			197	no entry		195	£123	0.63
Shalford	4177	634	£148	0.23	620			744	£518	0.70	910	£745	0.82
Wonersh	3568	770	£476	0.62	814			918	£1227	£1.34	1069	£917	0.86
Banstead	5445	717	£444	0.44	882			940	£712	0.76	991	£647	0.65
Epsom	13056	2404	£1056	0.44	2515			2890	£2140	0.74	3231	£1758	0.54
Ewell	10530	1112	£479	0.43	1135			1550	£641	0.41	1630	£737	0.45
Walton on the Hill	1132	204	£233	£1.14	263			314	£221	0.70	352	£200	0.57
Ashstead	3022	552	£428	0.78	548			579	£648	£1.12	607	£679	£1.12
Chessington	1368	137	£153	£1.12	146			150	£169	£1.13	189	£129	0.68
Cuddington	-	92	£149	£1.62	94			117	£462	£3.95	138	£248	£1.80
Fetcham	2808	271	£243	0.90	364			377	£154	0.41	384	£126	0.33
Headley	1098	271	£174	0.64	220			184	£170	0.92	253	£167	0.66
Leatherhead	5601	1078	£543	0.50	1209			1478	£1336	0.90	1724	£1043	0.60
Mickleham	3495	389	£375	0.96	416			505	£395	0.78	709	£385	0.54
Little Bookham	990	119	£185	£1.55	137			153	£135	0.88	191	£95	0.50
Effingham	2654	379	£310	0.82	443			499	£350	0.70	565	£231	0.41
East Molesey	2350	462	£273	0.59	509			526	£638	£1.21	546	£531	0.97
West Molesey	1364	320	£185	0.58	343			430	£457	£1.06	441	£219	0.50
Walton on Thames	11522	1476	£1093	0.74	1804			1891	£1766	0.93	2035	£1283	0.63
Weybridge	4162	747	£353	0.47	918			897	£663	0.74	930	£663	0.71
Esher	6080	847	£692	0.82	863			1108	£889	0.80	1215	£967	0.80
Stoke D'Abernon	2859	290	£194	0.67	307			317	£389	£1.23	289	£245	0.85
Elstead	1985	466	£113	0.24	521			608	£742	£1.22	711	£701	0.99
Frensham	3293	1051	£639	0.61	1112			1264	£1274	£1.01	1219	£1545	£1.27

Parish	Property Tax Amount Of Estimate Of The Annual Value Of The Real Property as Assessed April 1815	Population 1801	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1802–3	Amount Per Head 1802–3	Population 1811	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1811	Amount Per Head 1811	Population 1821	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1821	Amount Per Head 1821	Population 1831	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1831	Amount Per Head 1831
Seal and Tongham	2192	335	£390	£1.16	360			364	£389	£1.07	366	£364	0.99
Waverley	-	40	£87	£2.19	59			58	no entry		74	no entry	
Compton	2067	270	£241	0.89	332			423	£504	£1.19	455	£373	0.82
Godalming	13889	3405	£1582	0.46	3543			4098	£4231	£1.03	4529	£4079	0.90
Hambledon	1371	459	£102	0.22	384			381	£467	£1.23	437	£420	0.96
Pepperharrow	942	111	£98	0.88	133			130	£179	£1.38	144	£182	£1.26
Puttenham	1755	361	£193	0.53	339			389	£544	£1.40	372	£452	£1.22
Chiddingfold	3929	848	£595	0.70	933			999	£1271	£1.27	1095	£1551	£1.42
Thursley	2298	584	£458	0.78	564			608	£667	£1.10	708	£644	0.91
Witley	5282	1039	£1145	£1.10	1187			1264	£2730	£2.16	1376	£2281	£1.66
Bisley	1025	196	£93	0.47	204			273	£221	0.81	270	£201	0.74
Byfleet	3191	362	£189	0.52	392			427	£328	0.77	510	£464	0.91
Frimley	4027	532	£389	0.73	702			1284	£751	0.58	1351	£708	0.52
Horsell	3004	493	£396	0.80	564			617	£483	0.78	673	£604	0.90
Pyford	1630	230	£180	0.78	264			294	£337	£1.15	307	£351	£1.14
Chertsey	18022	2819	£1783	0.63	3629			4279	£3154	0.74	4795	£2517	0.52
Thorpe	3012	485	£173	0.36	523			509	£483	0.95	471	£331	0.70
Thames Ditton	7308	1288	£624	0.48	1444			1592	£1413	0.89	1878	£1425	0.76
Betchworth	5402	930	£691	0.74	107			909	£1077	£1.18	1100	£1263	£1.15
Buckland	2366	269	£564	£2.10	287			292	£503	£1.72	344	£418	£1.22
Charlwood	5079	860	£699	0.81	959			1134	£1008	0.89	1176	£1465	£1.25
Kingswood	1096	112	£33	0.29	153			187	£76	0.41	221	£66	0.30
Reigate Borough	2676	923	£780	0.85	1128			1328	£691	0.52	1491	£945	0.63
Reigate Foreign	9556	1325	£1013	0.76	1312			1633	£1196	0.73	1978	£1228	0.62
Burstow	2782	606	£588	0.97	601			715	£596	0.83	736	£629	0.85
Chipstead	2079	347	£256	0.74	403			440	£238	0.54	522	£329	0.63
Gatton	2331	112	£143	£1.28	99			135	£74	0.55	145	£92	0.63
Nutfield	3449	524	£776	£1.48	631			707	£827	£1.17	718	£830	£1.16
Horne	3213	476	£311	0.65	521			585	£670	£1.15	595	£542	0.91
Tandridge	3139	381	£486	£1.28	390			421	£558	£1.33	478	£589	£1.23
Caterham	1868	301	£289	0.96	333			435	£329	0.76	449	£366	0.82
Chelsham	2018	201	£258	£1.28	237			217	£446	£2.06	279	£190	0.68
Farleigh	847	95	£65	0.68	62			84	£68	0.81	83	£37	0.45
Tatsfield	1150	153	£107	0.70	139			174	£291	£1.67	166	£135	0.81

Parish	Property Tax Amount Of The Estimate Of The Annual Value Of The Real Property as Assessed April 1815	Population 1801	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1802–3	Amount Per Head 1802–3	Population 1811	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1811	Amount Per Head 1811	Population 1821	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1821	Amount Per Head 1821	Population 1831	Expenditure On Poor Relief 1831	Amount Per Head 1831
Titsey	1552	108	£163	£1.51	144			167	£376	£2.25	202	£172	0.85
Warlingham	1364	187	£274	£1.47	317			421	£384	0.91	454	£275	0.61
Woldingham	513	33	£27	0.82	58			47	£78	£1.66	48	£65	£1.35
Ash and Normandy	3287	601	£471	0.78	553			583	£573	0.98	650	£673	£1.04
Pirbright	2029	400	£320	0.80	421			472	£444	0.94	594	£362	0.61
Stoke next to Guildford	6836	788	£475	0.60	942			1120	£880	0.79	1327	£913	0.69
Wanborough	1351	101	£114	£1.13	105			107	£98	0.92	111	£30	0.27
Windlesham	4184	1060	£571	0.54	1148			1590	£768	0.48	1912	£645	0.34
Woking	9766	1340	£667	0.50	1578			1810	£1974	£1.09	1975	£2290	£1.16
Worplesdon	7109	945	£875	0.93	1013			1276	£1919	£1.50	1360	£1498	£1.10
West Clandon	1729	234	£135	0.58	324			361	£431	£1.19	389	£238	0.61
East Horsley	1576	223	£147	0.66	168			192	£320	£1.67	291	£200	0.69
West Horsley	2798	495	£357	0.72	474			611	£932	£1.53	702	£585	0.83
Ockham	2581	473	£417	0.88	494			565	£489	0.87	590	£511	0.87
Wisley	904	101	£70	0.69	97			144	£113	0.78	155	£131	0.85
Ockley	2812	592	£784	£1.32	572			642	£684	£1.07	710	£799	£1.13
Wotton	2353	441	£413	0.94	490			589	£546	0.93	651	£459	0.71
Capel	3329	675	£1120	£1.66	730			876	£1189	£1.36	915	£893	0.98
Dorking	13425	3058	£2300	0.75	3259			3812	£3931	£1.03	4711	£3835	0.81
Leigh	2820	390	£480	£1.23	403			453	£532	£1.17	483	£628	£1.30

Brayley History of Surrey Appendix 2 Population figures; PP 1803–04 Vol XIII; PP Returns 1824 IV.39; PP 1830–31 XI.205; PP 1835 XLVII Expenditure on Relief 1801 and 1811 SHC Vestry Accounts

By mapping Surrey's relief expenditure in 1821 (see Map 3.14) compared to the 1831 levels of spending (see Map 3.15), it can be seen across the county there was a decline in *per capita* spending on poor relief. Only in 19 parishes out of the 107 did *per capita* costs increase, and these were the predominately wealden southern parishes (see Map 3.16). Of course the system of relief operated on a parish-by-parish basis and "minor variations in liability for the poor rates might combine with the differential demands placed on the relief system by the structural poverty of social groups."<sup>56</sup> In each parish there was the "highly localised nature of social welfare provision,"<sup>57</sup> and as King has shown it was possible "for two contiguous parishes to be recognizing as deserving two different groups of poor people".<sup>58</sup> For an earlier period, Hindle has also commented on the "micro-politics at play in the assessment and disbursement of parish relief."<sup>59</sup> This can also be seen in Surrey for the period 1821–1831 *per capita* expenditure in the parish of Witley was consistently higher than in contiguous parishes (see Maps 3.14 and 3.15).

At the same time historians are increasingly aware of regional tendencies which place micro studies in a wider context.<sup>60</sup> Across Surrey it is also possible to see clusters of relief patterns among parishes and there were clearly regional variations in *per capita* spending in the north and south of the county.

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<sup>56</sup> S. Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c. 1550–1750* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004), p.285

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.297

<sup>58</sup> S. King, 'Introduction, Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Britain' in S. King, T. Nutt and A. Tomkins (eds), *Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Volume 1 Voices of the poor: Poor law depositions and letters* (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2006), xxxix.

<sup>59</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p.363.

<sup>60</sup> King, 'Poor relief' pp.360–8, *Poverty* pp. 141–226, 'Making the most of opportunity: The economy of makeshifts in the early modern north' in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The poor in England 1700–1850 an economy of makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp.228–57, and Lyle, 'Regionality' pp.141–157

**Map 3.14 - Per Capita Expenditure on Poor Relief in Rural Surrey 1820-1821**

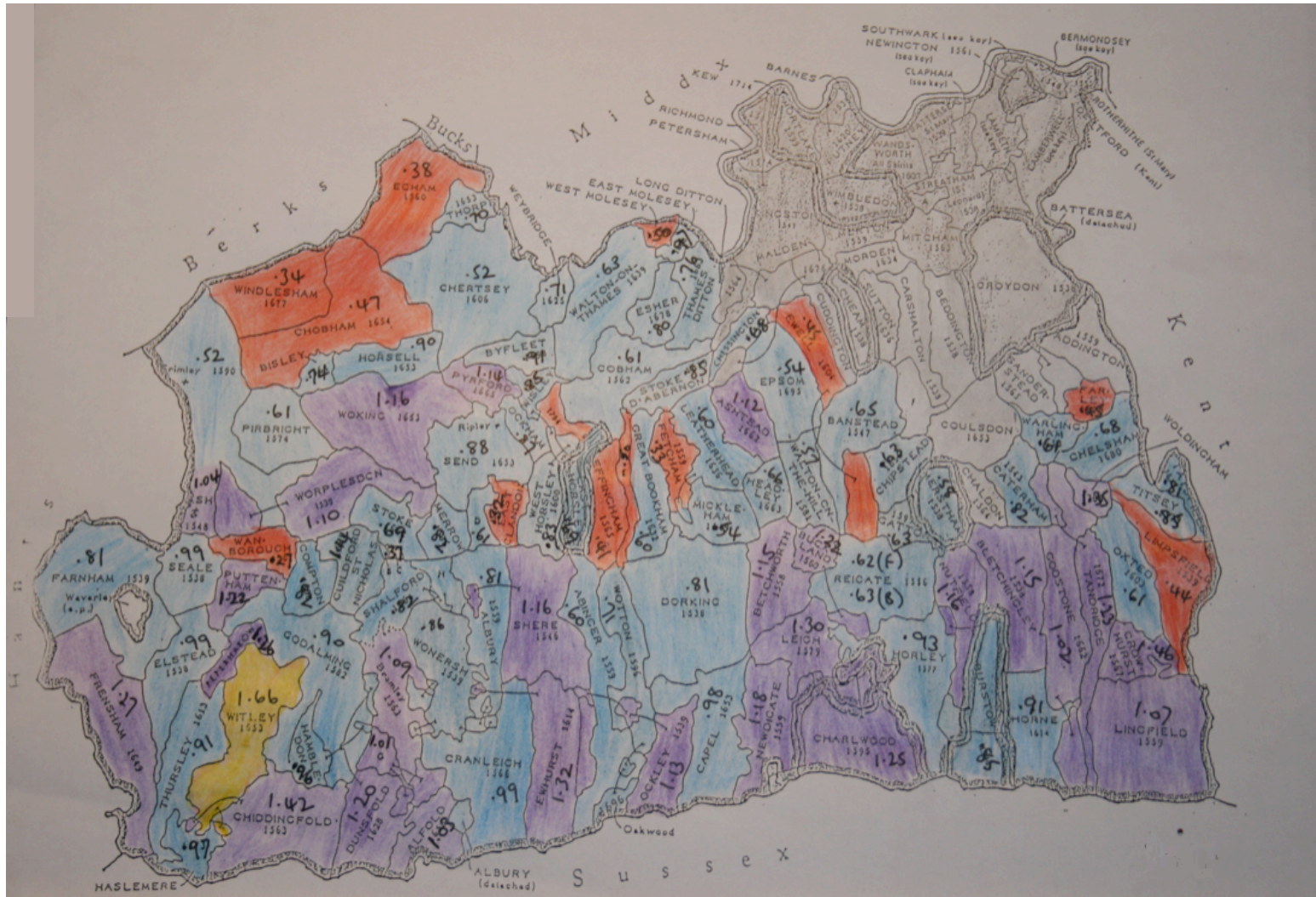


**Source:** Completed figures Queries A B and C Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries, Royal Commissioners Poor Law Report 1834 pp. 474-88



**Map 3.15 - Per Capita Expenditure on Poor Relief in Rural Surrey 1830-1831**

0.00p - 0.50p   0.51p - £1.00   £1.01 - £1.50   £1.51 - £2.00   £2.01 -

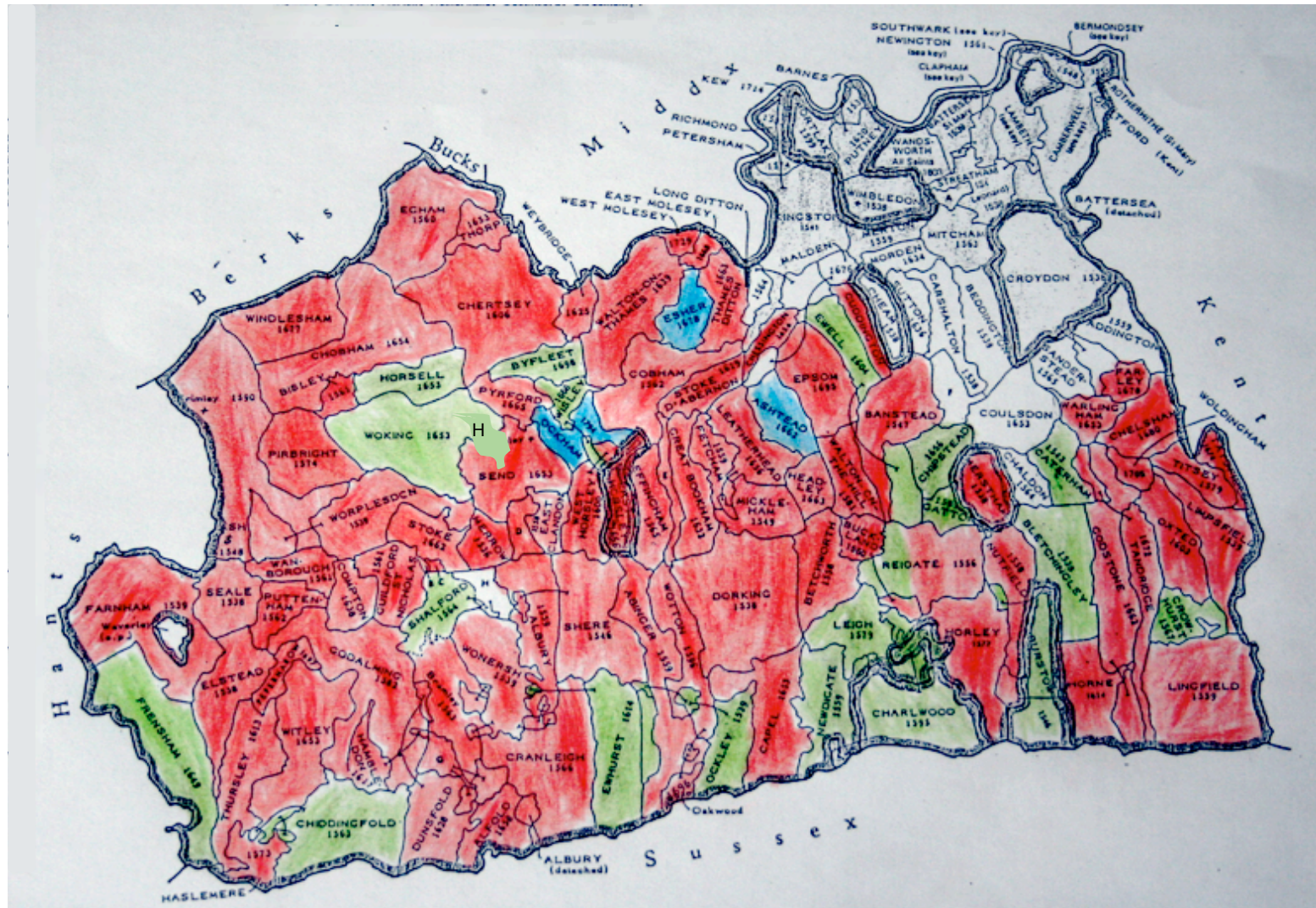


**Source:** Completed figures Queries A B and C Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries, Royal Commissioners Poor Law Report 1834 pp. 474-88



**Map 3.16**      **Increase/Decrease in per capita expenditure on Poor Relief in Rural Surrey 1831 compared to 1821**

■ Decrease in Poor Relief Expenditure 1831   
 ■ Increase in Poor Relief Expenditure 1831   
 ■ No change in Poor Relief Expenditure 1831



**Source:** Completed figures Queries A B and C Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries, Royal Commissioners Poor Law Report 1834 pp. 474-88



Although vestries were anxious to reduce ratepayers' poor rates, the figures also suggest that it was extremely difficult to do so, as the short-lived prosperity of the mid-1820s made little impact on real expenditure. Parish overseers faced the problem of the need to provide poor relief to an increasing number of claimants.<sup>61</sup> Boyer has noted that vestries found it politically difficult to reduce poor relief payments in line with the falling food prices because of the decline of rural industries, coupled with a decrease in agricultural demand for labour. Of course, the "ratio of paupers to population" was not a constant figure either.<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately, as there are no aggregate figures for the number and type of pauper claimants for all years (see Tables 3.17 and 3.18) it is not possible to provide accurate estimates of the real value of relief received by paupers or the exact the *per capita* cost of poor rates.<sup>63</sup>

Table 3.17 *Total numbers of those in receipt of indoor and outdoor poor relief in Surrey 1803–1815*

Year Ending	Total Population In Receipt of Poor Relief	Number Permanently Indoors	Number Relieved Outdoors	Total Receiving Outdoor And Indoor Relief	Number Receiving Occasional Relief
1803	36,140 (33%)	5,268 (4.8%)	25,699 (23.7%)	30,967 (28.5%)	5,173 (4.5%)
1813	22,298 (18%)	6,382 (5.1%)	8,138 (6.5%)	14,520 (11.6%)	7,778 (6.4%)
1814	23,431 (19%)	6,491 (5.2%)	8,665 (7.0%)	15,156 (12.2%)	8,273 (6.8%)
1815	23,034 (18%)	6,224 (4.8%)	8,603 (6.7%)	14,827 (11.5%)	8,207 (6.5%)

Table 3.18 *Total numbers of those in receipt of indoor and outdoor poor relief in England and Wales 1803–1815*

Year Ending	Total Population in Receipt of Poor Relief	Number Permanently Indoors	Number Relieved Outdoors	Total Receiving Outdoor and Indoor Relief	Number Receiving Occasional Relief
1803	1,040,716 (11.4%)	83,468 (0.9 %)	651,349 (7.2 %)	734,817 (8.1%)	305,899 (3.4%)
1813	971,913(9.2%)	97,223 (0.9%)	434,441 (4.1%)	531,664 (5.0%)	440,249 (4.2%)
1814	953,995(8.9%)	94,085 (0.9%)	430,140 (4.0%)	524,225 (4.9%)	429,770 (4.0%)
1815	895,973(8.2%)	88,115 (0.8%)	406,887 (3.7%)	495,002 (4.5%)	400,971 (3.7%)

Note: Bracketed (%) percentages are proportions of total population relieved by category

Sources: Abstract of the Poor 1803/4 xiii (175) 405–7, 714–18; 1813–1815, 1818 xix (82), 444–452 .

<sup>61</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Evidence G. Smallpiece Question 12708–12722 p.609.

<sup>62</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, p.138–9

<sup>63</sup> There are only complete returns for 1802–3 and 1813–1815. Abstract of Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII; Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers of Answers and Returns 1818 (82) XIX.

Table 3.17 does support the view that the most serious wartime crisis was that of 1802–3. Relief payments in Surrey were higher in those years than in the years 1812–1815. The final column in Table 3.17 suggests a shift away from regular pensions and relief-in-aid towards more casual relief, trends that are similar to the findings of Eastwood's work on Oxfordshire.<sup>64</sup> However, there are problems using these sources, as the 1803 return showed in total about one million people on relief, including 300,000 children under the age of fifteen. This figure is not accurate, as the census repeatedly counted paupers who applied for relief on more than one occasion in the year. The next census, taken for 1813–1815, failed to count children under fifteen years on outdoor relief and non-residents of the parish. Even though there are difficulties with these figures, they are the best nationwide and county-wide statistics for the period.<sup>65</sup>

### *Balancing the books*

One important role for the overseers was to control expenditure, but it is evident that the experience of rural Surrey reflected King's observation that it was "rare for overseers to balance their books."<sup>66</sup> Increasingly during the period 1815–1834 overseers found it extremely difficult to raise sufficient money to meet outgoing expenses. For example in the parish of Betchworth in April 1823 bills amounting to £240 10s 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d were unpaid from the previous accounting year. Of those Mr Steele (the doctor's bill) was not paid until 29<sup>th</sup> March 1824 and Mr Tickner's flour bill paid on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1824.<sup>67</sup> Thus, to pay for these debts, the vestry had to increase the rates the following year, convert them to a rolling debt, or force overseers to pay for the shortfall. As a result, they found their personal finances under strain, though they might hope that the vestry would reimburse them in the following financial year.

<sup>64</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural England* p.144.

<sup>65</sup> K. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.37–43, and Huzel, 'The labourer', p.770.

<sup>66</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 88.

<sup>67</sup> SHC, P22/5/72 'Betchworth 9 April 1823, 29 March 1824 and 2 April 1824'.

There are some examples in surviving vestry minutes of parishes having to deal with unpaid debts at the end of the financial year. In Dorking in 1823 the overseers stood down with the great regret that they were leaving the parish encumbered with a debt of over £100, a reflection on the severe pressure on the “rates throughout the past winter season arising out of the numerous hands for whom it has been impossible to find any kind of profitable employment.” On this occasion, the vestry supported the overseers by acknowledging the “zeal and pains of the officers in the discharge of the duties they have had to perform.”<sup>68</sup> The following year, the overseers “liquidated the debts owing by their predecessors and met every claim against the parish throughout the year.”<sup>69</sup> The vestry of Caterham struck out of the parish books the debt of £33 18s 8 ½ d due from the late overseer and Michael Rowed “to be forgiven” as he was insolvent.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, in 1823 the Ewell vestry had to borrow money (to be repaid over two years) to meet the shortfall of £127 2s 11d in the accounts at the end of the year.<sup>71</sup> In 1834, to the relief of the out going overseers in Esher, the vestry agreed that the incoming overseers would pay outstanding bills at the end of year, totalling £89 9s 11d, out of the new rate.<sup>72</sup> Conversely, in 1817 the parish of Thames Ditton had reappointed the present overseers for a further year, “for the purpose of discharging the present debt.”<sup>73</sup>

There are also examples of overseers who were accused of neglecting their duties, or left the financial situation at the end of their term of office in disarray for their successors to resolve. In July 1831 the ratepayers of Dorking accused Mr John Bull of defrauding the parish of money that was being paid to the able-bodied poor working in the gravel pits and workhouse garden. A committee of churchwardens, overseers and ratepayers

<sup>68</sup> SHC DOM/9/3 part 2, ‘Dorking Parish Accounts 25 March 1823’.

<sup>69</sup> SHC DOM/9/3 part 2, ‘Dorking Parish Accounts 25 March 1824’.

<sup>70</sup> SHC LA2/2/21, ‘Caterham vestry minutes 20 November 1822’.

<sup>71</sup> SHC 3831/1/1, ‘Ewell vestry minutes 27 March 1823’.

<sup>72</sup> SHC 238/ES/9/3, ‘Esher vestry minutes 10 April 1834’.

<sup>73</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, ‘Thames Ditton 11 April 1817’.

investigated him, reporting in August 1831 that it accepted his accounts.<sup>74</sup> In Epsom in 1835 the vestry examined the accounts of the late overseer and ascertained that William Hasted owed the balance of £113 18s 7d to the parish. The vestry instructed him to repay the money but later accused the vestry clerk, Mr Everest, of having accepted “bribes from former overseers in order to make their accounts appear correct.”<sup>75</sup> An investigation by the vestry not only cleared Mr Everest of any wrong doing but also praised him for his “integrity”. It is interesting to note the matter ended when Mr Hasted paid Mr Jay, one of the incoming overseers, the balance due to the parish.<sup>76</sup> In 1835 some overseers and other parish officers came in for a great deal of criticism in the report of the assistant commissioner, Charles Mott. In Horne he reported that “the general parochial management rivals in its deformity some of the worse parishes in England.” At Nutfield he found “parish matters are also governed in the most lavish and inconsistent manner.”<sup>77</sup> He also suggested that many local officers were corrupt. In the parish of Horne, for example, the vestry clerk sold “all sorts of linen, drapery and grocery” to the poor and the books contained many “obvious adjustments.”<sup>78</sup>

### *The Sturges-Bourne Acts*

In 1817 Sturges-Bourne chaired a major enquiry into the operation of the poor laws. He believed that “the remedy lay in restoring the allegedly traditional upper-class hegemony over vestries, from their current supposed usurpation by lesser ratepayers whose populist generosity towards claimants underpinned present maladministration.”<sup>79</sup> As a result, Parliament passed what became known as the first Sturges-Bourne Act in 1818, which stipulated plural voting, with one to six votes based on the parishioners’ rating cast in a

<sup>74</sup> SHC DOM/9/3 part 3, ‘Dorking Vestry Minutes 10 August 1831’.

<sup>75</sup> SHC 3132/2/3, ‘Epsom vestry minutes 15 May 1835’.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> C. Mott, Report to the Poor Law Commission 1835, MH32/56 2353/29 p.311.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.312.

<sup>79</sup> R. Wells, ‘Poor-law reform in the rural south-east; the impact of the Sturges-Bourne Acts during the agricultural depression, 1815–1835’, *Southern History*, 23 (2001) 56.

general vestry. Ratepayers with rating bills in arrears or refusing to pay were disfranchised. The second statute, the 1819 Select Vestries Act was permissive, though the option was not available to administrations under the Local or Gilbert Acts. Under this act, the adoption of a select vestry depended on general vestries voting under the 1818 Act to set up small parochial committees dominated by the more affluent ratepayers. This new system of voting gave householders rated at up to £50 per annum one vote, and those assessed at more than £50 an additional vote for each £25 of rateable value up to a maximum of six votes. The result was to enable substantial ratepayers to outvote the majority of smaller ratepayers and the major ratepayers usually dominated membership of the select vestry system. The select vestry was to comprise between five and twenty “substantial householders” who were annually elected and their names registered by a magistrate. “By focusing authority upon a small governing elite within the parish, the select vestry system helped to promote administrative efficiency.”<sup>80</sup> The parish of Dorking held the first meeting of its select vestry on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 1820, attended by its twenty members, all substantial householders, including four large landowners, William Denison, William Crawford, Robert Barclay and Richard Lowndes. It appears that the resident gentry and the tradesmen of the town attended regularly but the farmers were very lax.”<sup>81</sup> Pirbright set up its select vestry in December 1820 with eleven substantial householders, including Reverend Henry Hammond, as members. In 1823 Epsom appointed a select vestry of seventeen major ratepayers and in 1827 Abinger elected eighteen substantial householders, including Reverend Ridley, to serve on their select vestry and appointed James Foster as assistant overseer.

Select vestries were to report formally twice a year to general vestries that retained the right to nominate parish officers annually. The Act permitted the appointment of salaried assistant overseers, though the decision remained with the general vestry. Neither idea

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<sup>80</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural England*, p. 176.

<sup>81</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 558A.

was new but the “committee’s aim was to regularise a more professional approach towards administration.”<sup>82</sup> Select vestries were given powers to enlarge or build workhouses and to rent or purchase twenty acres of land to be used for employment of the able-bodied poor. Where possible, family members, including grandparents, parents and children, were to be responsible for each other in time of need. The 1819 Act stated that select vestries should meet at least fortnightly and maintain minute books. Adoptees should have kept separate minutes for general and select vestries but in Surrey, as Wells has found, “records of select and general vestry meetings are often juxtaposed within the same volume.”<sup>83</sup> The specific role of the select vestry was to scrutinise every relief claimant’s exact circumstances and to distinguish between the “idle or profligate” and the deserving poor. Framers of the act hoped that select vestries would reduce claimant numbers now that “parish expenditure was being placed unequivocally in the hands of the more substantial men of property” and with the assistance of, paid assistant overseer to thoroughly investigate every claim made to the parish for relief.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, not all the records of Surrey select vestries have survived. A reference in the parish minute book in 1831 reveals that Chertsey operated a select vestry but there are no details of its actions.<sup>85</sup> It can be seen in Table 3.19 in 1819–1820 17 select vestries were formed as a result of the 1819 legislation. This rose to 19 in 1823–1824 and dropped to 10 by 1834.

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<sup>82</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.129.

<sup>83</sup> Wells, ‘Poor-law reform’, p.61.

<sup>84</sup> Eastwood, *Government and community*, p.45.

<sup>85</sup> SHC P65/1/1 and 1867/box 5/1–10 Dorking select vestry, Pirbright 1648/3, Epsom 3132/2/3, Abinger, Shere 1956/1/14, Chertsey minute book P2/1/1.

Table 3.19 *Operating Select Vestries in Surrey 1819–1834*

DATE	SELECT VESTRIES
1819–1820	17
1820–1821	14
1821–1822	19
1822–1823	21
1823–1824	19
1824–1825	15
1825–1826	16
1826–1827	13
1827–1828	16
1828–1829	14
1829–1830	15
1830–1831	15
1831–1832	12
1832–1833	10
1833–1834	10

Source: Amount of Monies expended for relief Abstract of the Poor 1818 XIX (82), Return on Poor relief 1830/1 xi (52), Return on Poor Relief 1831/2 xlv (216), Abstract Returns 1833 xxxii(32) and Abstract Returns 1835 xlvii (284).

### *Controlled spending*

Some pamphleteers believed the setting up of select vestries would reinvigorate parish administration. One magistrate wrote in support of the Select Vestries' Act. "It has abridged without abrogating the wholesome control of magistrates, and by clothing the parishioners with authority, has given a stimulus to the exercise of their attention, on a subject in which individual interests are inseparably blended with those of the community at large."<sup>86</sup> Copleston believed the appointment of select vestries "will undoubtedly be of great service especially in populous parishes."<sup>87</sup> Dunkley notes that the select vestries were designed, "to induce economy in parish expenditure by restricting the intervention of the bench", as it now needed at least two magistrates to void a select vestry's decision. Nonetheless, intervention of the justices often remained unhampered.<sup>88</sup> Maclean observed that where select vestries were set up, "material advantage has arisen to the

<sup>86</sup> Annon., *Letter on the poor laws and the practical effects of 59 Geo. III c12* (London, 1821).

<sup>87</sup> E. Copleston, *A second letter to the Right Hon Robert Peel MP for the University of Oxford* (Oxford, John Murray, 1819), p.96.

<sup>88</sup> P. Dunkley, 'Paternalism the magistracy and poor relief in England 1795–1834' *International Review of Social History*, 24 (1979) 378.

inhabitants” both in reduction in the scale of expenditure and the number of applications for relief.<sup>89</sup> When Epsom set up a select vestry in 1823 the Reverend Darby commented that the “poor would derive the most beneficial advantage from the results of such a measure.”<sup>90</sup> This is questionable, as select vestries aimed to reduce spending.

Detailed records for the operation of the select vestries only survive for Dorking, Frimley and Shere, but the existing records indicate that these bodies were extremely pro-active in trying to maintain poor relief costs at a minimum.<sup>91</sup> The Frimley general vestry had shown great concern in the winter of 1818 at the rising cost of poor relief, and minuted that they considered that “indiscriminate relief” had been given to paupers in the parish. It hoped that by setting up the select vestry in October 1819 there would be much stricter control over the administration of poor relief.<sup>92</sup> The parish of Shere’s select vestry was established in December 1829 as a result of the opinion of the general vestry that “the parish would be better managed.” Seventeen substantial householders were elected, including the rector Thomas Duncomb. This has also been shown in other counties where select vestries were adopted.<sup>93</sup> In its first year of operation the Dorking select vestry reviewed the parish’s relief policies and immediately set up four committees and co-opted members of the select vestry to serve on them. Between them the committees dealt with general matters, oversaw the administration of the parish workhouse, searched for employment for the unemployed poor, and examined paupers on the permanent pension lists. These committees were given specific tasks to carry out by the select vestry and had to report to the select vestry on a regular basis. For example, as part of their remit, members of the workhouse committee were instructed to determine whether the poor within the workhouse and in rented parish cottages were “proper objects to be received

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<sup>89</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 558A .

<sup>90</sup> SHC 3132/2/4, Epsom vestry minutes 1815–1827.

<sup>91</sup> SHC P65/1/1 Dorking select vestry 1820–22 and P65/1/2 1822–25, Frimley 2589/3/1, select vestry 1819–26 and 2589/3/2 1826–27, Shere SHER/8/1, select vestry 1830–33, P10/1/5 1821–30, P10/1/6 1830–33 and P10/1/7 1833–36.

<sup>92</sup> SHC 2589/3/4, ‘Frimley Vestry Book 12 September 1818’.

<sup>93</sup> Wells, ‘Poor-law reform’, 52–115.



therein” and to consider what numbers of additional poor could be placed in the workhouse.<sup>94</sup> The committee recommended that the workroom and intended schoolroom in the workhouse should be divided into small rooms to receive paupers “who usually throw themselves on the parish in the winter season.”<sup>95</sup> After review, the select vestry also decided not to renew the contract for the management of the workhouse with the present contractor, Stephen Stone. Instead the parish would maintain control of the workhouse by appointing a governor who would report directly to the select vestry. In December 1820 a sub-committee of the workhouse committee was set up to investigate the accounts of the new governor, Mr Beeching, and were pleased to report he had made economies in running the workhouse. The committee also controlled the number of admissions to the house, instructing the assistant overseer not to allow any paupers into the workhouse without first communicating with one or more members of the workhouse committee at any time, except in an emergency.<sup>96</sup>

Select vestries also carefully scrutinised the payment of outstanding bills. In the parish of Dorking the vestry asked widow Dibble to explain why a Mr Dalton, physician, and not Mr Millet, the parish doctor, had charged the parish for treatment of her daughter's leg.<sup>97</sup> In January 1823 Mr Jackson, a physician at the Guildford hospital, treated Henry Earwaker, a pauper from Dorking, but as Mr Jackson had received no order to treat the patient the Dorking select vestry refused to pay his bill. In February 1833 Mrs Parker of Brockham, a parishioner of Dorking, had requested that Mr Millet attend her daughter but he had refused. Mr Steele of Reigate then attended the girl at a cost of 10s, the amount being deducted from Mr Millett's salary by the select vestry.<sup>98</sup> They were also anxious to get family members, wherever possible, to take on the responsibility of caring for elderly or sickly relatives. The Dorking select vestry invoked their powers to insist that family

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<sup>94</sup> SHC P65/1/1, 'Dorking select vestry minutes 20 June 1820 and 17 July 1820'.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 August 1820.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 December and 29 December 1820.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 October 1820.

<sup>98</sup> SHC P65/1/1, 'Dorking select vestry 27 January 1823 and 1867/BOX 5/1 signed minute book February 1833'.

members cared for family members. For example, three sons were informed in February 1823 that they had to provide for their mother, who was receiving weekly relief from the parish. If they refused to do so, the select vestry was prepared to make application to the magistrates for an order to enforce their support. After review, it was deemed that only one son was able to provide for the mother and he was to be compelled to maintain her.<sup>99</sup> The Chertsey select vestry also instructed the assistant overseer to write to the son of Samuel Cousins to require him to contribute towards his parents' upkeep, and stopped their allowance of 2s per week.<sup>100</sup>

### *Monitoring relief payments*

Select vestries also monitored closely those requesting relief, a feature found in other counties too.<sup>101</sup> The Frimley select vestry insisted from December 1819 that all paupers applying for relief had to account for their monthly expenditure to the general or select vestry before any further relief was to be granted.<sup>102</sup> In May 1821 all those receiving a parish allowance were told to attend a meeting with their families to be inspected, and were warned that non-attendance would result in relief payments being immediately stopped.<sup>103</sup> Of the twenty-seven families who did attend, eight families suffered a reduction in their pay, ranging from 3s to 6s per week. In September 1822 the Dorking select vestry also instructed the assistant overseer to draw up a comprehensive list of all paupers belonging to the parish and receiving weekly allowance or other allowances. In October, moreover, it established a committee to consider the allowances made to paupers belonging to the parish but residing in other parishes.<sup>104</sup> The same diligence can be seen in the operation of the Shere select vestry: it instructed the overseers to prepare detailed lists of persons having received regular and occasional relief, it closely regulated

<sup>99</sup> SHC P65/1/1, 'Dorking select vestry 10 February 1823 and 24 February 1823'.

<sup>100</sup> SHC P2/1/1, 'Chertsey minute book 3 November 1831'.

<sup>101</sup> Wells, 'Poor-law reform', 65-87 and SHC P65/1/1, Dorking select vestry 1820-22 and P65/1/2 1822-25.

<sup>102</sup> SHC 2598/3/4, 'Frimley vestry book 7 December 1819'.

<sup>103</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley select vestry 1 May 1821 and 8 May 1821'.

<sup>104</sup> SHC P65/1/1, 'Dorking select vestry 16 September 1822'.

payments for work, and it refused relief to paupers who kept any dog, except a sheep dog.<sup>105</sup> In October 1820 the Frimley select vestry had also agreed that all persons who received parish relief were no longer able to keep dogs and, if they did, their allowances would be stopped immediately.<sup>106</sup>

Allowances to paupers were also carefully managed. For example, in August 1831 the Shere select vestry reduced George Penfold's weekly pay by 6d to 1s because one of his daughters had been put out to service.<sup>107</sup> In May 1823 the Frimley select vestry learned that Charlotte Moth and Mary Cheeseman had refused to apply for places in service so it directed the overseers to stop their allowances if such a report were correct.<sup>108</sup> In November 1819 the select vestry refused widow Mrs Gates's written application for relief, arguing that she should have personally appeared before the vestry to plead her case. She again applied for relief for herself and her four children the following month. This time the vestry pointed out that she had received the substantial sum of £30 on 7<sup>th</sup> October when she ceased to keep the White Hart public house and expressed its concern that this money apparently had been spent. The vestry required a detailed account of her expenditure since October before any further consideration could be given to her case.<sup>109</sup> The select vestries were also anxious to verify that paupers classified as "unfit to work" were unable to work. When William Paice's wife applied for relief, as her husband was unable to work because of a sprained back, the vestry required confirmation from the parish doctor of Paice's state of health before granting any assistance.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> SHC PSH/SHER/8/1, 'Shere select vestry resolution book 24 January 1830 and 15 July 1830'.

<sup>106</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley select vestry 31 October 1820'.

<sup>107</sup> SHC PSH/SHER/8/1, 'Shere select vestry resolution book 1830–31, 11 August 1830'.

<sup>108</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley select vestry 27 May 1823'.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 November 1819 and 14 December 1819

<sup>110</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley select vestry 20 November 1821'.

*Deserving poor*

Minutes of the meetings also clearly show that they scrutinised every relief claimant's circumstances and did try to distinguish between "the idle or profligate" and the deserving poor. In January 1820 the Frimley select vestry made it clear that in future they would examine every pauper's case before making any decision on what relief it would grant. Elsewhere, in the parish of Westbourne in Sussex, the assistant overseer was instructed that "constant vigilance" was required when examining relief requests.<sup>111</sup> In Frimley when William Parker applied for some monetary relief to augment his salary of 10s 6d per week he received nothing, as the select vestry made it clear they would not make up weekly wages.<sup>112</sup> There are also many cases where select vestries "extolled the virtues of the Act, notably facilitating discriminatory relief practices."<sup>113</sup> In Surrey, as in other counties, it was common practice. This was the case in Frimley in November 1819 when the select vestry interviewed John Field, a pauper who had applied for additional relief, although he was employed by the parish working on the roads. It refused him assistance. When he informed the vestry he was no longer prepared to work on the roads for the money he received, he was informed in no uncertain terms, if that were the case, he would be immediately conveyed to a magistrate. Two weeks later John Field again applied for relief. On this occasion he was unable to work because of a wound on this hand and again the vestry only granted him the same allowance as he would have earned working on the road.<sup>114</sup> William Legg also applied to the Frimley select vestry for relief in May 1820 but it did not consider him "a proper object of relief." As he had voluntarily left his job "for the express purpose of throwing himself upon the parish," the vestry rejected his application.

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<sup>111</sup> Wells, 'Poor-law reform', 74.

<sup>112</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley select vestry 11 January 1820 and 24 January 1820'.

<sup>113</sup> Wells, 'Poor-law reform' 74.

<sup>114</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley select vestry 18 November 1819 and 30 November 1819'.

When Nat Fuller applied for relief in June 1820 and refused the work offered, the vestry deemed him not “a proper object of further relief.”<sup>115</sup>

Select vestries were as watchful of paupers' behaviour. The select vestry in Dorking acted in a very similar manner. The Hilton family were told to provide for their own lodging as the vestry did not consider them “fit objects for relief” and the local magistrate was instructed to punish two young women of the parish who, for the second time, had recently given birth to bastard children.<sup>116</sup> The select vestry also stopped James Scott's family allowance of two loaves a week in March 1821, as he had been seen drunk in the parish. Nonetheless, it agreed to grant his son 2s and two loaves weekly.<sup>117</sup> The Frimley select vestry were also not prepared to tolerate certain behaviour from paupers in receipt of relief. In January 1822 the vestry considered the case of William Paine whose “ill conduct, violent behaviour, drinking in the alehouse and deserting his wife and family” resulted in an application to the magistrates to order Paine to answer before the vestry for his behaviour.<sup>118</sup> In June 1822 the Frimley select vestry refused John Field's wife's application for additional relief on account of her husband's desertion as it considered her “behaviour so extremely bad.”<sup>119</sup> In addition, select vestries were also anxious for paupers to find their own employment wherever possible and were not prepared to offer assistance if work had been turned down. Thus, John Withal's application for relief was turned down by the Frimley select vestry in 1834 as it was reported he had refused work.<sup>120</sup> The vestry also refused paupers further employment if the standard of their previous work had been poor. When Thomas Allen applied for further jobs, the Frimley select vestry refused his request on account of his poor trenching work.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 May 1820 and 13 June 1820

<sup>116</sup> SHC P65/1/1, 'Dorking select vestry 4 September 1820'.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 March 1821.

<sup>118</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley select vestry 1 January 1822'.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 June 1822.

<sup>120</sup> SHC 2589/3/3, 'Frimley select vestry 21 July 1834'.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 January 1835.

On the other hand, those deemed “deserving” were helped. Wells has noted in the Westbourne minute book many successful claimants were recorded as “industrious” beneficiaries.<sup>122</sup> In Surrey the Frimley vestry did agree to grant John Field’s boy a pair of trousers but only after the overseers had heard from his employer that he was a satisfactory employee.<sup>123</sup> In 1834 Nathaniel Fuller’s wife applied for some clothes for her daughter, then in service with farmer Derham, but was told that before any clothing would be granted she must obtain a written note confirming her daughter’s service contract for a year. At the next select vestry Mrs Fuller presented a certificate from farmer Derham which also confirmed the girl’s industriousness, and it was agreed that 14s 6d should be granted for the clothes.<sup>124</sup> Again, when David North applied for relief in May 1820 he was granted 2s 6d per week as he was of good character and a sober, industrious man. Although William Brown’s wife did not obtain a weekly allowance for her fourth child, “in consequence of her husband’s good character it was agreed that the overseers should give them a temporary relief of 5s.”<sup>125</sup> In December 1820 the Frimley select vestry agreed that the weather had prevented “sober, industrious men” from working on the common, so the overseer was to make some allowance to their families. At the same time, when William Parker applied for relief on account of the weather in January 1821, he received nothing, as the vestry, after investigation, did not consider the weather was the cause.<sup>126</sup>

#### *The able-bodied set to work*

Select vestries were also anxious to see able-bodied paupers employed and in winter months a great deal of time was taken up in a discussion of employment opportunities.<sup>127</sup> In November 1821 the Dorking select vestry, concerned about the number of labourers out of employment, made application to the Duke of Norfolk to enclose part of the waste

<sup>122</sup> Wells, ‘Poor-law reform’, 74.

<sup>123</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, ‘Frimley select vestry 30 May 1820 and 4 March 1823’.

<sup>124</sup> SHC 2589/3/3, ‘Frimley select vestry 12 May 1834 and 26 May 1834’.

<sup>125</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, ‘Frimley select vestry 12 November 1822’.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 May 1820, 12 December 1820 and 9 January 1821

<sup>127</sup> Wells, ‘Poor-law reform’, 70.

on Ranmore Common. The duke granted the request. In July the following year a committee again was set up to consider how to employ the poor in the ensuing winter, and again application was made to the Duke of Norfolk to enclose land on Holmwood Common. This time he refused.<sup>128</sup> It also instructed the vestry clerk to produce a list of prices for work to be presented to the magistrates for approval. In May 1824 the select vestry was anxious to find employment for labourers and instructed the assistant overseer to prepare a fortnightly list of paupers out of regular employment and set to work by the parish, together with their ages. This list was then circulated amongst farmers in the parish so “that an opportunity may be offered them of employing such men as they may think proper.” In November the select vestry again produced a list of those out of employment and working for the parish, and the amounts they were to be paid, which were dependent on age and the number of family dependents.<sup>129</sup> The Frimley vestry was prepared to help paupers become self-sufficient, and in May 1820 they offered paupers trenched land for cultivation, free of all rent in lieu of parish allowances.<sup>130</sup>

Majendie found the appointment of select vestries beneficial in large towns and he quotes in his report that the select vestry at Ashford in Kent was able to reduce spending by 50%.<sup>131</sup> In Surrey the saving made by the appointment of select vestries was on average between 14% and 19%, although in its first year of operation at Frimley it saved the parish 46% in poor relief.<sup>132</sup> It can be seen from Table 3.20 that all seven select vestries reduced poor relief spending between 1821 and 1831. The parish of Shere only made a 5% reduction on the amount spent per head, but the Shere vestry had only been formed in 1829. The Frimley select vestry only made a reduction of 10% in spending in 1831 but had already reduced spending substantially before this date. The other five parishes

<sup>128</sup> SHC P65/1/1, ‘Dorking select vestry 9 November 1821 and P65/1/2 Dorking select vestry 15 July 1822’.

<sup>129</sup> SHC P65/1/2, ‘Dorking select vestry 31 May 1824 and 1 November 1824’.

<sup>130</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, ‘Frimley select vestry 16 May 1820’.

<sup>131</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey A. Majendie p.168A.

<sup>132</sup> The parishes used to estimate costs Epsom select vestry appointed February 1823; Dorking June 1819; Woking May 1822; Frimley December 1819 Abstract Returns Poor Laws Surrey 1815–1834.

made, on average, a reduction of 33% on the amount spent per head. This clearly demonstrates that in the short term select vestries did achieve a reduction in parish spending, by scrutinising every relief claimant's exact circumstances and carefully managing the parish's financial affairs. It is obvious that it was a most onerous task to try and reduce parish costs.

Table 3.20 *The operation of select vestries and parish relief costs 1802–1831*

Parish	Abinger	Dorking	Shere	Epsom	Chertsey	Pirbright	Frimley
Population 1801	632	3058	871	2404	2819	400	532
Expenditure On Poor Relief 1802–3	£572	£2300	£544	£1056	£1783	£320	£389
Amount Per Head 1802	0.91	0.75	0.62	0.44	0.63	0.80	0.73
Population 1811	629	3259	918	2515	3629	421	702
Population 1821	742	3812	1077	2890	4279	472	1284
Expenditure On Poor Relief 1821	£955	£3931	£1311	£2140	£3154	£444	£751
Amount Per Head 1821	£1.29	£1.03	£1.22	0.74	0.74	0.94	0.58
Population 1831	767	4711	1190	3231	4795	594	1351
Expenditure On Poor Relief 1831	£461	£3835	£1384	£1758	£2517	£362	£708
Amount Per Head 1831	0.60	0.81	£1.16	0.54	0.52	0.61	0.52
When Select Vestry Established	1827	1820	1829	1823	? (operating in 1831)	1820	1819
% Reduction Spent Per Head On Poor Relief Between 1821 And 1831	53%	21%	5%	27%	30%	35%	10%

Source: Brayley *History of Surrey* Appendix 2 Population figures; BPP 1803–4 Vol XIII; Parliamentary Returns 1824 IV.39; Expenditure on Poor Relief, Abstract of the Poor 1803–4 xiii (175), 1818 xix (82), 1833, xxxii (32), and 1835 xlvii (284).

### *Collection of rates*

The collection of rates was a continuous problem for all overseers.<sup>133</sup> It can be seen the select vestries were extremely pro-active in trying to collect all due rates and were prepared to circulate printed notices of defaulters. In November 1820 the Dorking select vestry was most concerned that bills amounting to £770 and debts due to the parish of £350 were still outstanding. As many of these debts comprised unpaid rates, it drew up a

<sup>133</sup> See Chapter Six on ratepayers



list of twenty-five defaulters and the reasons given for non-payment were printed. In December Mr Richard Smith, the overseer, informed the select vestry that several persons were incapable of paying their rates because of poverty. When in April 1821 the matter was still not resolved, the vestry clerk was instructed to prepare another list of defaulters of poor rates for the year ending 25<sup>th</sup> March 1820. In August 1822 again, the overseer was instructed to produce a list of rate defaulters. This was an on-going struggle, as it was reported on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1824 that another list of defaulters of rates was to be printed and distributed. In 1833 moreover overseers were still being requested to produce lists of defaulters.<sup>134</sup> The Frimley select vestry experienced a similar problem and the overseers showed great concern in March 1822, because not all of the rates due had been collected and they could not balance the accounts for the year. As a result, those persons with unpaid rates were summoned to attend a meeting of the vestry.<sup>135</sup> In March 1823 the vestry instructed the overseers to make a list of all the arrears due to the parish.<sup>136</sup> The following year the overseers were unable to finalise the annual accounts by 25<sup>th</sup> March 1824 because some of the rates remained uncollected. Again, on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1825 there were unpaid rates at the end of the financial year. In April 1826 the Frimley vestry ordered the overseers to distribute printed notices to unpaid ratepayers giving them notice and informing them if they did not pay their rates they would be summoned.<sup>137</sup> This was an ongoing problem that can be identified in all parishes, but where select vestries operated there was a much greater sense of urgency and purpose to ensure all due rates were collected.

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<sup>134</sup> SHC P65/1/1, 'Dorking select vestry 18 November 1820 and 11 December 1820, P65/1/2 Dorking select vestry 14 April 1821, 26 August 1822, 26 July 1824 and DOM/9/3 21 January 1833'.

<sup>135</sup> SHC 2589/3/4, 'Frimley vestry book 25 March 1822 and 2 April 1822'.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 March 1823, 25 March 1824 and 25 March 1825.

<sup>137</sup> SHC 2589/3/2, 'Frimley vestry 4 April 1826'.

*Select vestries abandoned*

Although many select vestries reduced spending and introduced greater efficiency to the management of parish affairs, parishes in Surrey abandoned their select vestries. In March 1832 it was reported that an “efficient select vestry cannot be formed” in Epsom and this led to a resolution to summon a general vestry. Many other parishes, including Worplesdon, Shere and Frimley, also abandoned their select vestries. Maclean attributes this to several reasons. Firstly, the Swing riots were a contributory factor, because select vestry members were not prepared “to incur the odium or expose themselves to the vengeance openly threatened against persons or property of those whom the rioters chose to consider active in the administration of the parochial funds.”<sup>138</sup> Wells has also commented that “there can be no doubt that the rural poor bore the brunt of the discriminatory and punitive spirit of Sturges-Bourne.”<sup>139</sup> Secondly, by 1830 many select vestries were finding it increasingly more difficult to maintain rate reductions.<sup>140</sup> Thirdly, select vestries became unpopular as they were in the hands of “the higher class of ratepayers, cut off from many of those opportunities for jobbing and favouritism.”<sup>141</sup>

*The role of the justice of the peace*

County magistrates played an important role in the administration of poor relief, and at Quarter Sessions they regularly scrutinised and audited the yearly accounts of the overseers. An entry in the vestry minutes at Egham in 1830 recorded that the assistant overseer had received £2, the sum he had paid for faggots on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1828. The magistrates refused it because they had considered the expense illegal and

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<sup>138</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 558A .

<sup>139</sup> Wells, 'Poor-law reform', 91.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>141</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 558A .

unnecessary.<sup>142</sup> Magistrates ratified the election of parish officers and monitored and even intervened in the day-to-day administration of the parish.

Substantial proprietors did not have much to do with the day-to-day administration of poor relief. "The case-by-case scrutiny usual in the dispensing of relief made the job of overseer too tedious" for large landowners.<sup>143</sup> Unpaid justices of the peace, many were "major landowners, while an increasing proportion were lesser gentry" and this was the case for rural Surrey.<sup>144</sup> These magistrates sometimes played an active role in deciding cases of relief, where there were disagreements between the parish officials and the claimants. Increasingly in the 1820s, some magistrates became more actively involved in poor relief matters. In 1828 a Select Committee reported that in many counties, "especially throughout the south of England," the justices had assumed the responsibility of directing relief administration, particularly where it affected the able-bodied poor and their families.<sup>145</sup> Hitherto select committees had also indicated the bench was not adverse to intruding into parochial affairs.<sup>146</sup> Poor law practice has been described by Hitchcock as "a mosaic of interlocking triangles of negotiation between the labouring poor, the parish vestry and the county magistracy."<sup>147</sup> The right to subsistence and the right to labour at a fair rate of pay are the two key issues that can increasingly been seen to cause tension between parish officials and magistrates. Mandler notes "at moments of crisis in the eighteenth century the magistrates first impulse was to blame the farmer whose short-sighted greediness deprived the labourer of his just wage or even his job."<sup>148</sup> After 1815, with increasing problems of providing parochial employment and poor relief to increasing

<sup>142</sup> SHC Acc 1493/2, 'Egham vestry minute book 24 April 1830'.

<sup>143</sup> P. Mandler 'The making of the new poor law redivivus', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987) 133.

<sup>144</sup> P. King, 'The summary courts and social relations in eighteenth-century England' *Past and Present*, (2004) 126.

<sup>145</sup> Select Committee on the Relief of Able-bodied Persons for the Poor Rates IV 1828 p.4.

<sup>146</sup> Select Committee on Poor Rates V 1822, and Select Committee on the Poor Rates V 1823, and Select Committee on Agricultural Labourer's Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824.

<sup>147</sup> T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe, 'Introduction: Chronicling poverty-the voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640-1840' in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe, 'Introduction: Chronicling poverty-the voices and strategies

of the English poor, 1640-1840' (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>148</sup> Mandler 'The making of', 134.

numbers of unemployed, there is a great deal of evidence which points to gentry dissatisfaction with bench “as the locus of local governance and social regulation”.<sup>149</sup> Many parish officials and country gentlemen wished to “work outside the magisterial system”<sup>150</sup> and the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1817 rejected the concept of natural right of relief to the poor and instead saw the landowners and farmers “in the natural order of things the best trustees and guardians for the public.”<sup>151</sup> Thomas Lacoast who reported for the large parish of Chertsey clearly showed the landed elite’s increasing disenchantment with magisterial discretion in poor law matters. He complained that the parish committee of ratepayers and the overseers were dissatisfied with a scale of relief set by the magistrates for the parish.

“We thought that the poor people, many of them, were allowed too much money....and we made alteration according as we thought they deserved it; to some we gave more than the magistrates ordered, and some less; and we received an order the next morning, that the money should be made up immediately to those who received less.”<sup>152</sup>

Of course magistrates had a knowledge of the law but as King notes many of the decisions made by magistrates were not based upon law but by bodies of precedent created by other magistrates. For example Henry Drummond reported that when labourers applied to the bench in Guildford for relief they operated “for our own regulation, to make out a scale of allowance” similar to the scale published by the magistrates of Norfolk.<sup>153</sup> In fact “magistrates had the power to

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 140

<sup>151</sup> Select Committee of the House of Commons on Poor Laws VI, 1817 p.10

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, Evidence T. Lacoast p.109

<sup>153</sup> Select Committee of the House of Commons on Labourers’ Wages, VI 1824, Evidence Henry Drummond p.48.

alter, by accretion of precedent, the tenor and purpose of the poor law”<sup>154</sup> and magistrates interpreted their own powers extremely widely.<sup>155</sup>

Ratepayers also complained that magistrates did not support the vestries. Dunkley has argued the relief granted by local magistracy increasingly undermined many of the economies introduced by local parish vestries.<sup>156</sup> Lacoast complained the magistrates sometimes ordered relief to paupers “whether they worked or not” and he believed reliance upon the poor rates “induces poor persons to exert themselves less than they would otherwise do”.<sup>157</sup> Majendie also reported that in the parish of Lingfield overseers complained that magistrates on some occasions ordered relief,

“sometimes without hearing the overseer; or if the overseer met the pauper at the bench, he found the magistrates decided against him and even frequently made their observations on him in presence of the pauper, which took away the authority he ought to have.”<sup>158</sup>

In the replies to the Poor Law Commissioners, the parish vestry of Betchingley commented that it did not feel it was desirable that magistrates, “should have the power of ordering relief to persons who refuse to obey an order of vestry to enter the workhouse”. George Sumner, a large landowner in East Clandon, felt that “infinite mischief has been done by such orders which in most cases I hold to be illegal”, that is, orders from magistrates. John Chart, the vestry clerk for Newdigate, pointed out that the right of appeal to magistrates led to paupers being “encouraged to apply when not satisfied”. Rector Keene of Buckland also believed paupers “threatening to go to magistrates” made

<sup>154</sup> S. King, ‘Introduction, Narratives of the poor’, p. xliii.

<sup>155</sup> P. King, ‘The summary courts’, 127.

<sup>156</sup> Dunkley, ‘Paternalism the magistracy’, pp.385– 6.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid* p.113

<sup>158</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey A. Majendie p.175A.

unreasonable demands on the vestry, which had to make payments under duress because of an “unwillingness on the part of the parish officers to appear before the magistrates on the appeal of the pauper”<sup>159</sup>.

As Landau has noted, the bench by law was seen as “a paternalist institution, its popular image was as the poor man’s friend.”<sup>160</sup> In Surrey, the magistrate, Reverend Onslow, believed that “the poor would be ground to powder” without the support of the bench.<sup>161</sup> In his reply to the Select Committee on Labourers’ Wages, Henry Drummond, a Surrey JP who attended petty sessions in Guildford, believed “overseers always represent the labourer who appeals against him as a very undeserving character, one requires better evidence than his to know what the real character of the man is.”<sup>162</sup> This indicates a prevalent feeling among some magistrates that the parish vestries could not be trusted to abstain from pursuing their own selfish interests when administering parish poor relief. Eastwood believes that this was partly due to the narrowness of vision of the parish officials in relation to the magistrates, “whose administrative perspective was regional rather than narrowly parochial.”<sup>163</sup> Some parishes also recognised that the right of appeal to the magistrates was a positive measure. The parish of Limpsfield noted “appeal to the magistrates is absolutely necessary for the protection of the poor man and of the parish officers”. Thomas Page, a magistrate who made the return for Cobham, supported the appeal procedure as a means of protecting the poor.<sup>164</sup> At the same time, in 1835 the Assistant Commissioner, Charles Mott, declared in his report, “so far as my investigations have as yet extended (the magistrates have) exhibited the same laxity of management,

<sup>159</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 43 pp.474d–488d.

<sup>160</sup> N. Landau, *The Justice of the Peace 1679–1760* (Berkeley, London, University of California Press, 1984) p.330.

<sup>161</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question p.487d.

<sup>162</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers’ Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, Report H. Drummond p. 48.

<sup>163</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p. 31.

<sup>164</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX, Evidence Question 44 Replies pp.474d–488d.

the same supineness arising from a dislike to mix with those with whom the parochial measures are generally left and desirous of avoiding being placed in an unfavourable position with the paupers.”<sup>165</sup>

Mandler has observed that parishes established select vestries after 1819, in part to induce economy in parish expenditure and partly to restrict the intervention of the bench. However, the justices could, to an extent, still intervene. It now required at least two magistrates to void a select vestry’s decision, but authority was given to one justice in cases of urgent need, and it was for the magistrate to determine the need. It is evident that magistrates throughout England were often involved in the administration of relief. From the findings of the Royal Commission of 1834 it is possible to find some evidence of magisterial activities in Surrey, although of the 146 rural parishes only 18% reported, (see Table 3.21). What they do show in parishes that reported, is active engagement with parochial administration, and this is the case throughout the south-east.<sup>166</sup>

Table 3.21 *Surrey answers to Rural Queries Part IV question 43 :*

“Is Relief or Allowance generally given in consequence of the advice or order of the magistrates, or under the opinion that the magistrates would make an Order for it if application were made to them”

1. Total Number Of Rural Parishes	146
2. Percentage Of Rural parishes Reporting	18
3. Total County Population in 1831(in thousands)	491
4. Percentage Of Population Reporting	12
5. Per Capita Relief Expenditure In 1831	10s 11d
6. Magistrate Controlling Relief	75
7. Magistrate Not Controlling Relief	25

Source: M.Blaug, “The poor law report re-examined” pp. 236–37 for columns 1–5; P. Dunkley “Paternalism magistracy and poor relief” p. 383 for columns 6–7

<sup>165</sup> Appendix to the Second Annual Report of the Commissioners under the Poor Law Amendment Act 1835 Appendix B MH32/56 2353/29, Evidence for Surrey C. Mott p.312.

<sup>166</sup> King P. ‘Customary rights and women’s earnings: the importance of gleaning to the rural labouring poor 1750 – 1850’, *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991) 461–76

*The right of appeal*

Of course, when parish officials decided to reduce pensions or withhold relief these were not just arbitrary measures, and the decision had to be “justified not only to paupers and ratepayers but also to magistrates.”<sup>167</sup> As Dunkley points out, under the Old Poor Law it was the right of the poor to appeal to the bench against the relief decisions of the overseers and the ratepayers in vestries. How many disgruntled paupers took up their rights or indeed were aware of them compared “with the number who would have had a theoretical case is impossible to discern”<sup>168</sup> but magistrates in the southeast often reversed some of the harshest decisions made by overseers in refusing to grant relief.<sup>169</sup> Some practised a rather distanced form of paternalism which could be actively and usefully influenced by the labouring sort.<sup>170</sup> Many overseers complained that paupers “made skilful use of their right to choose which local magistrate to go to.”<sup>171</sup> Joseph Mayett’s autobiography shows how he was prepared to be confrontational and defeated parish overseers by appealing to the local magistrate.<sup>172</sup>

From parish records it is sometimes possible to trace appeals where reference is made to the appeal in vestry minutes, or a letter concerning the appeal has survived, and many appeals were dealt with justices acting out of session. Of course, appeals that reached the petty sessions can be more easily traced, but, unfortunately for rural Surrey, these records have not survived. Of course, petitions by paupers to magistrates represent “the end of a long, parochially based, decision making process”,<sup>173</sup> and appeals could involve onerous duties and expense for the overseers to travel to the nearest magistrates to justify their

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<sup>167</sup> Mandler, ‘The making’ 194.

<sup>168</sup> King, ‘Introduction, Narratives of the poor’, p. xliii.

<sup>169</sup> Dunkley, *The crisis*, p.54.

<sup>170</sup> P. King, ‘Edward Thompson’s contribution to eighteenth-century studies. The patrician-plebeian model re-emanined’ *Social History* 21(1996) pp.215–28.

<sup>171</sup> Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, ‘Introduction’ p.11.

<sup>172</sup> A. Kussmaul (ed.), *The autobiography of Joseph Mayett of Quainton 1783–1839* (Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1986) pp.73–93.

<sup>173</sup> King, ‘Poor relief’, 363.



actions. Non-compliance required the overseers to appear before a magistrate, along with the defendant, to explain why they had refused to provide the relief. Therefore, on some occasions the poor were able to obtain relief from the overseers by just threatening to take them before the bench, “because of either the habitual reluctance of the overseers to confront the justices or the propensity of the magistrates to override the parish officers.”<sup>174</sup> This constituted the “invisible” influence of the magistrates in the administration of poor relief. In 1821, for example, the parish of Chessington refused to supply Thomas Westfield with shoes. He then applied to Mr Trotter, a magistrate in Epsom, who then wrote to the parish requesting the overseer to give him the shoes, which were given. In 1831 the overseers of the parish of Esher had to pay Samuel Prince 5s or appear before a magistrate at the grand jury room in Kingston, so they gave him the money.<sup>175</sup> In Betchworth, George Rose, a labourer, “poor and utterly unable to provide for himself, his wife and children without the assistance of the parish”, applied for relief to the overseers but without success.<sup>176</sup> After appealing to the magistrate, the parish granted him the sum of 8s. Of course by no means were all magistrates always on the side of the poor. For example, C. Master, magistrate living in Oxted, stated in 1833 “during the time I have acted as a magistrate (nearly 17 years) I have never made an order for relief.”<sup>177</sup> It must also be noted that paupers pressed their cases with local magistrates often in the face of opposition from local vestries.<sup>178</sup> This must partly explain why not all paupers appealed to local magistrates when they were dissatisfied with their relief payments. It must also be remembered that industry, sobriety and deference were key factors in receiving parish relief. “Deference was the lubricant that greased the machinery of welfare” and appeal to magistrates could jeopardise this.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Dunkley, *The crisis*, p. 54.

<sup>175</sup> SHC P47/2/593, ‘Esher vestry minutes 29 January 1831’.

<sup>176</sup> SHC P22/5/596, ‘Betchworth overseers vouchers 27 January 1824’.

<sup>177</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX, Evidence Question 43 Reply C.L.H. Master p487d.

<sup>178</sup> King, ‘Poor Relief’, 363.

<sup>179</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p.447

Eastwood has shown how magistrates used both the Quarter and Petty Sessions to “urge common policies upon parishes” which would promote efficiency and economy at parish level.<sup>180</sup> Drummond demonstrated that some magistrates operated an unofficial scale of relief when paupers made applications. He reported to the select committee in 1824 that, “we reckoned that 1s a week was the utmost that a single man ought to pay for his lodging and that the single man should have 4s a week, which only allows him 3s to spend upon clothes and all, man and wife 6s, a man and one child 7s.”<sup>181</sup> However, as King has pointed out, this did not mean that magistrates could ensure minimum standards of relief because only small areas were “policed” by particularly active magistrates and this was also the case in Surrey.

### *Conclusion*

Clearly, poor law legislation was mostly concerned with the need to provide the relief to those classified as needy. At the same time, parish officers and overseers were increasingly burdened with the supply side of providing the relief. Many parish officials aimed for greater administrative efficiency but at the same time “the level of poor rates was ultimately determined by the scale of poverty and the public liability to support the needy.”<sup>182</sup> This meant pacifying ratepayers, who were increasingly concerned with the rising costs of providing for the increasing numbers of unemployed, and at the same time answering to magistrates and the complaints of paupers. In some parishes it is possible to identify increasing dissatisfaction with magisterial activity. Mandler calls it “civil war within the landed élité, with paternalism its battleground.”<sup>183</sup> The introduction of the select vestries as a result of the Sturges-Bourne Acts clearly did reduce spending and introduced greater efficiency to the management of parish affairs, but the experiment was

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<sup>180</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.32.

<sup>181</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, Report H. Drummond p. 47.

<sup>182</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.179.

<sup>183</sup> Mandler 'The making of', 140.

short-lived. In essence, the administration of poor relief was fraught with difficulty. Increasingly, “parishes were painfully aware that the level of poor rates was ultimately determined by the scale of poverty and the public liability to support the needy”,<sup>184</sup> and this was a difficult balance to maintain.

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<sup>184</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.179.

## Chapter Four

### Providing For The Poor Outside The Workhouse

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As in other parts of southern England, Surrey was the scene of a mounting crisis of poverty in the early nineteenth centuries. The problem of high prices, population growth, disbandment of the army, some farm mechanisation and the decline of some domestic industries created a general crisis of poverty among agricultural labourers in southern England, which resulted in a combination of male underemployment, female unemployment, under-employment and inadequate wages. The “majority of early nineteenth-century southern labourer caught in the flooded rural labour market of the post-war years.”<sup>1</sup> Research by Smith, Barker-Read and King has reinforced this general picture.<sup>2</sup> As Burchardt has noted, “agricultural employment failed to keep pace with the rapid increase of the rural population, especially in the south”, and the seasonality of labour demands characteristic of arable farming also resulted in increasing numbers of paupers having to resort to the poor relief system for assistance.<sup>3</sup> Boyer observed seasonality was especially pronounced in the grain producing southeast, and a scarce supply of labour only “during spring planting and summer harvesting”<sup>4</sup>, and Cowherd noted “the persistence of depressed conditions in agriculture” during the 1820’s.<sup>5</sup> The precise combination of need varied from parish to parish and the problems had to be dealt with on a parochial level.

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<sup>1</sup> P. King, ‘Inequality, identity and labouring poor’ in H. French and J. Barry, *Identity and agency in England, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> R.M. Smith, ‘Ageing and well-being in early modern England: pension trends and gender preferences under the English old poor law 1650–1800’, in Johnson P. and Thane P. (eds), *Old age from antiquity to post-modernity* (London, Routledge, 1998), and M. Barker-Read, ‘The treatment of the aged poor in five selected west Kent parishes from settlement to Speenhamland 1662–1797’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Open University, 1989) also S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England a regional perspective* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> J. Burchardt, *The Allotment movement in England 1793–1873* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2002), p.9.

<sup>4</sup> G. Boyer, ‘The economic role of the English poor law 1780–1834’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> R. Cowherd, *Political economists and the English poor laws* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1977), p. 127

*Charitable activity*

To make do, the poor had to engage in complex strategies, and there were a range of alternative welfare mechanisms that kept some people off parish relief lists.<sup>6</sup> Recourse to charity, kinship, taking in lodgers, remarriage for widows or widowers, begging and petty dealing, can all be identified as ways to supplement incomes.<sup>7</sup> Hindle has called it a “hidden world of informal expedients.”<sup>8</sup> The first recourse of the indigent was the informal domestic care that might be provided by the next of kin. In addition a neighbourly “tradition of mutual help” existed which involved small loans, provision of food, drink and casual labour to needy neighbours.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to trace individual case histories, but for parishes there are records of charitable activity. Many rural Surrey parishes had limited charitable resources and this is compatible with Smith’s work on Oxfordshire.<sup>10</sup> These small charities were usually administered by the vestries and made a minor contribution to keeping some people off the relief lists.<sup>11</sup> However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century charitable income “made almost no dent in poor law spending”.<sup>12</sup> This is illustrated in parish of Cobham in 1820–21 when only £40 7s was distributed in charity money, (see Table 4.1).

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<sup>6</sup> King, *Poverty*, pp. 171–2.

<sup>7</sup> M.E. Fissell, ‘The sick and drooping in eighteenth century Bristol and its region’, *Social History of Medicine*, 2 (1989) 35–58.

<sup>8</sup> S. Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c. 1550 – 1750* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), p.16.

<sup>9</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular belief in sixteenth and seventeenth century England* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) p.555.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, (1998) ‘Ageing and well-being’, pp. 64–95.

<sup>11</sup> M. Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy Charity and society in Nineteenth-century Bristol* (Suffolk, Boydell and Brewer, 1999), p.109.

<sup>12</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.173.

Table 4.1 *Charity money disbursed in Ripley for the year 1820–1821*

Year 1820–1821	Charity Money Distributed	Paid Out Expenditure On Poor Relief
	Mr Henry Smith's Charity: £27 7s Cloth Given	
	Rent Ripley Premises: Bread Poor £10 (3 Payments: December January and April) 12 Widows Given Crowns- Total Given £3	
Total	£40 7s	Total £1059

Source: SHC PSH/COB/5/2 Cobham churchwarden accounts 1818–1849 and Abstract Poor Rate Returns IV 1821 BPP.

Conversely, the poor law system did not merely deal with emergencies, for it acted as “a proto-welfare state which reflected and reacted to the wide risks of poverty at any point in time, and over the life cycle.”<sup>13</sup> The poor law was a pivotal social institution in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in “providing relief, enforcing discipline, an expression of communal responsibility yet a potent reminder of social distance.”<sup>14</sup> In market societies “individuals are economically vulnerable when their material resources are insufficient for their needs” and the welfare system at the beginning of the nineteenth century “did react to changes in the landscape of need and that it did spread its welfare net widely.”<sup>15</sup> As Hollen Lees observes, “despite all the problems and the niggling meanness of overseers, the laws offered a shelter in bad times.”<sup>16</sup> Parish poor relief did “provide a basic safety net for those who had exhausted other means.”<sup>17</sup> Contemporaries did recognise that the poor were an integral part of society, and historians including Slack believe “it was assumed by magistrates, managers and the poor themselves that the poor

<sup>13</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.53.

<sup>14</sup> L. Bonfield R. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds), *The world we have gained histories of poplation and social structure* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 201.

<sup>15</sup> A. Kidd, *State society and the poor in nineteenth century England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999), p.3. and King, *Poverty*, p.169.

<sup>16</sup> L. Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers the English poor laws and the people 1700–1948* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.77.

<sup>17</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 60.

were entitled to relief if they required it.”<sup>18</sup> Kidd goes further, and sees the notion of entitlement less in legal terms and more “a question of a moral right to access the necessities of life”, and Snell has identified how “widely encompassing” was the nature of the relief.<sup>19</sup> He has noted that a labouring man with legal settlement in a parish saw this as “his guarantee of parish relief during a period of poverty” he calls it “a system of compulsory paternalism.”<sup>20</sup> This does need qualifying, as parishes recognised the problem of pauperism but drew a distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor and emphasised that assistance given “was a gift to be bestowed, not a right to be claimed.”<sup>21</sup> Measures included the provision of work and the payment of cash doles, pensions or the payment of rents but the parish authorities recognised that, as noted in Chapter Three, they required carefully monitoring.<sup>22</sup> In addition Hollen Lees has commented on the growing conviction by the 1820s that the poor laws themselves produced pauperism. She sees “the lines between the deserving and undeserving poor being redrawn with paupers clearly placed on the wrong side of the tracks.”<sup>23</sup> The increase of rural poverty at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the south east of course placed heavy pressures on the parishes to provide relief. Overtime Hollen Lees observed “mass poverty triggered a general revulsion against outdoor relief and against the needy, who were slowly pushed to the margins of their communities”<sup>24</sup> and this issue will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

How significant poor relief was in support of agricultural populations is difficult to ascertain, but the tabular statement of 1831 for the year ending 25<sup>th</sup> March 1829 shows

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<sup>18</sup> J. Slack, *English poor law 1531–1782* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1990), pp. 36–7, also T. Wales, (1984) ‘Poverty poor relief and the life-cycle some evidence from seventeenth century Norfolk’, in R.M. Smith(ed), *Land kinship and life cycle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.351–404, and K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor social change and agrarian England 1660–1900* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.72, also T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe ‘Introduction’, in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling poverty the voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Press, 1997), p.10.

<sup>19</sup> Kidd, *State society*, p.13 and Snell, *Annals*, p. 105.

<sup>20</sup> Snell, *Annals*, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup> Kidd, *State society*, p.4.

<sup>22</sup> Discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>23</sup> Hollen Lees, *The solidarities* p. 93.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

that 9.7% of the country's population was in receipt of relief. In comparison, Berkshire reported 17% of its population in receipt of relief, Wiltshire 15% and Essex and Sussex 14%. In Surrey it was 7%.<sup>25</sup> Of course, these figures only indicate the proportion of the poor in parishes, because those turned down are not recorded. Marshall confirmed this level, while other historians have suggested that the figure was even higher. Krause estimates that between the years 1817 and 1821 "it is probable that over 20 per cent of the population" countrywide received some relief.<sup>26</sup> However, his suggestion is based on conjecture. It is difficult to state categorically an exact figure, as the decentralised nature of the old poor law meant there were a large number of local initiatives and immense geographical variation in the methods of relief instigated by the various parishes. This chapter will examine the way that the parochial authorities of Surrey dealt with these problems during the period 1815–1834.

*Relief of poverty outside the workhouse: "deserving poor"*

In Surrey it is possible to identify a vast number of possible methods used by the rural parishes to relieve paupers outside the workhouse. These include occasional payments to the casual poor of the parish, and money paid to the aged, impotent, widows and children of the parish and to non-residents. Other expenses comprised the cost of the care and maintenance of bastards and orphans, medical attendance and funeral expenses, tools, materials, clothing, fuel, food and wages for paupers working in the parish, and rent and taxes. Naturally the authorities did not grant relief by placing people into clearly defined categories, for paupers during a year received relief in many different ways, as family

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<sup>25</sup> Minutes of Evidence before Committee of the House of Lord VIII 1830–1, Tabular Statement the Comparative Ability of the Several Counties in England to support their Agricultural Population pp. 246–8.

<sup>26</sup> J. D. Marshall, *The old poor law 1795–1834* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1985 reprint), pp.33–6 and J.T. Krause, 'Changes in English fertility and mortality, 1781–1850' *Economic History Review*, 11 (1958) 66.



reconstitution shows.<sup>27</sup> The example of relief payments to families in Tanridge illustrates this point, (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 *Tandridge poor relief payments April 1831–March 1832*

Tandridge Relief Payments April 1831–March 1832	Occasional Poor Relief	Tools And Work	Clothing And Shoes	Poor Rates
Crowder family (Husband, Wife And Two Children)	April 16s; May 10s Because Of Sickness Unable To Work; 3s November, Little Work;	Richard (father) June scythe 5s;	July Shoes Boy 6s; February Shoes Daughter 8s 6d And 6 yds Calico	
Thomas Smith And Family: Out Parishioners Living In Limpsfield	August Family Ill With Fever 4 Wks £2 7s; Nurse 4 Wks £1 6s; September 4 Wks £2 19s; October £3 13s 6d; November £3 7s; December £3 4s; January £4; February £1 16s; March 16s			April Poor Rates Paid To Limpsfield Parish 6s
Edward Dedman	August 6d; February No Work 5s;	February 18 Days' Digging 19s; March 24 Days Gravel Digging £1 8s	May One Pair Trousers 2s; Shoes December 9s	

Source: SHC P24/1/18 Tandridge Overseers Accounts

In the category “deserving” there were four main conditions that rendered people unable to work, hence deserving of relief. Sickness included all forms of mental and physical disability, both on a temporary and permanent basis. Old age was less easily defined at a

<sup>27</sup> S. Ottaway and S. Williams, ‘Reconstructing the life-cycle experience of poverty in the time of the old poor law’ *Archives* 23 98 (1998) 19–29, and Snell, *Annals*, p.28 and E. M. Hampson, *The treatment of poverty in Cambridgeshire 1597–1834* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press) also T. Wales, ‘Poverty, poor’, pp.351–404.

time of no fixed retirement age, so people became eligible for relief when they could no longer support themselves by working. In addition, the aged were often the sick, but conversely they might be regarded as able-bodied and employable until quite elderly. This is compatible with findings for Chertsey, the largest parish in rural Surrey with a population of 4795 (see Graph 4.3), which shows permanent relief payments made by the parish. Of those in receipt of relief, the vestry only classified on average about five per cent of the population as “aged.” However, when this is compared with the breakdown of relief payments by age (see Graph 4.4), those of sixty years and over far exceed the five per cent classified as aged by the parish in the accounts.<sup>28</sup> A third group comprised deserted wives, unmarried mothers, widows with large families and, less frequently, widowers. The last group, children, obtained relief as a result of parental poverty, neglect by parents or as orphans. The overseers were also responsible for their education and had to find them employment when they were old enough to work.

### *The able-bodied*

The second category, and the more difficult to classify, were the able-bodied poor. Unemployment or underemployment, low wages, a large family to support, as well as many other additional factors, often led to long or short-term poverty for families, and were contributory factors forcing a labourer to request relief from the parish.<sup>29</sup> The “life-cycle nature of poverty was a persistent feature in the allocation of poor relief over the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century.”<sup>30</sup> At certain times in the life cycle individuals were more vulnerable: generally the young and the elderly, those with young families and people who were sick or injured. The categories of young and elderly are clearly discernible in Chertsey (see Graphs 4.3 and 4.7). In addition, crisis points associated with

<sup>28</sup> SHC P2/1/1 Chertsey Select Vestry 1831–32

<sup>29</sup> Snell, *Annals*, pp. 105–6, and M. Hanly, ‘The economy of makeshifts and the role of the poor law: a game of chance?’ in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The poor in England 1700–1850 an economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 77 and L. Hollen Lees, ‘The solidarities’, pp.65–6 also Ottaway and Williams, ‘Reconstructing’, pp.19–29.

<sup>30</sup> Ottaway and Williams, ‘Reconstructing’, p.29.

the prevalence of cyclical unemployment regularly occurred, so that in Surrey the “poor law loomed large in the daily life of the agricultural labourer, especially in winter months of slack employment, in times of agricultural depression or at times of falling real wages.”<sup>31</sup> This is compatible with findings for Chertsey that show more people applied for temporary relief in winter months (see Graph 4.5). Williams has also shown that, by the 1830s, especially in winter months, underemployment was significant in a number of communities in central Bedfordshire.<sup>32</sup>

### *Pension Payments*

King notes that “communal welfare kicked in progressively as recipients were obliged to withdraw from the labour market.”<sup>33</sup> Pensions were by no means “strictly age-related benefits”<sup>34</sup> and parishes often paid pensions to the elderly, widows and widowers, orphans and the chronic sick on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. Pensions were really disability payments, rather than pensions in the modern sense of the word.<sup>35</sup> Convenient for both pensioner and overseer and for all beneficiaries, the pension’s greatest asset was its regularity. Pensions were not provided as a right but in some counties they had become a common feature of poor relief long before 1800. Thus, some seventeenth century Norfolk and Hertfordshire parishes were providing regular pensions.<sup>36</sup> By 1800 there was acceptance that the elderly had rights to relief, Smith notes there was a “detectable sentiment that the elderly were entitled to communal support.”<sup>37</sup> It was usual practice for people over 70 years and a substantial number between 65–70 years to receive poor law pensions, as old age could generate chronic long-term need and

<sup>31</sup> J.P. Huzel, ‘*The Labourer and the Poor Law 1750–1850*’, in G.E. Mingay (ed), *The agrarian history of England and Wales 1750–1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 755.

<sup>32</sup> S. Williams, (2005) ‘Earnings poor relief and the economy of makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the early years of the New Poor Law’, *Rural History* 16 (2005) 23.

<sup>33</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, ‘Ageing’ p. 78.

<sup>35</sup> E. H. Hunt, ‘Paupers and pensioners past and present’, *Ageing and Society*, 9 (1990) 415.

<sup>36</sup> W. Newman–Brown, ‘The receipt of poor relief and family situation: Aldenham Herts 1630–90’, in R.M. Smith (ed), *Land kinship and life-cycle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.405–22, and Hindle, ‘On the parish?’ pp.271–99.

<sup>37</sup> Smith, ‘Ageing’ p.82.

marginality.<sup>38</sup> These figures are compatible with the pension figures for Chertsey, shown in (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 *Chertsey pensions payments April 1831–March 1832*

Pension Payments April 1831–March 1832	%
under 19 yrs	17%
20 – 30 yrs	4%
31 – 40 yrs	7%
41 – 50 yrs	15%
51 – 60 yrs	5%
61 – 70 yrs	25%
71 – 80 yrs	23%
81 – 90 yrs	4%

Source: SHC P2/1/1, Chertsey Pension Payments April 1831–March 1832

At any one moment in the 1840s “about 65–70% of all women in England and Wales who were aged 70 or more along with 50–55% of all men so aged, were being given a regular poor law pension.”<sup>39</sup> In Surrey the Assistant Commissioners commented in their report that the payment of pensions to the aged and infirm was widespread. The amounts varied from 1s 6d to 3s per person per week, but never exceeded the cost of maintaining individuals in the workhouse. A breakdown of relief payments for Chertsey shows that the young and the old were the largest recipients of relief payments (see Graph 4.4) and widowers was the largest group identified as requiring assistance on the permanent relief lists (see Graph 4.3). Widows and widowers usually obtained between 1s 6d and 2s 6d per week, depending upon the size of their families, their earnings and the price of flour.<sup>40</sup> King in his research on pension payments noted in Calverley “pensions amounted to well

<sup>38</sup> D. Thomson, ‘The welfare of the elderly in the past: a family or community responsibility?’ in M. Pelling and R. M. Smith (eds), *Life death and the elderly: historical perspectives* (London, Routledge, 1991), p. 196 and King, *Poverty* pp.150–2.

<sup>39</sup> D. Thomson, ‘The decline of social welfare: falling state support for the elderly since early Victorian times’, *Ageing and Society*, 4 (1984) 468.

<sup>40</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p.538c.

under 10 per cent of mean weekly wages” and considerably below a possible subsistence level.<sup>41</sup> This is in line with Hunt’s suggestion that in most areas poor law pensions provided approximately a third or less of the average individual income,<sup>42</sup> although pensions were flexible, they were capable of being increased or reduced to meet the pauper’s changing circumstances. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century studies by Smith, Ottaway and Barker-Read have shown that pensions paid in real terms were squeezed.<sup>43</sup> Smith has identified in his research that the “late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a substantial decline, at least in the southern agrarian economies, in the well being of the elderly female.”<sup>44</sup> In addition, not only did pension sums fail to keep pace with inflation, but a greater proportion of poor relief was allocated to irregular relief.<sup>45</sup> This was also the case in many Surrey parishes the linear graph for Capel’s spending clearly illustrating this (see Graph 4.8) as does Table 4.9 showing Dorking relief payments for the years 1822–1834.

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<sup>41</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 197.

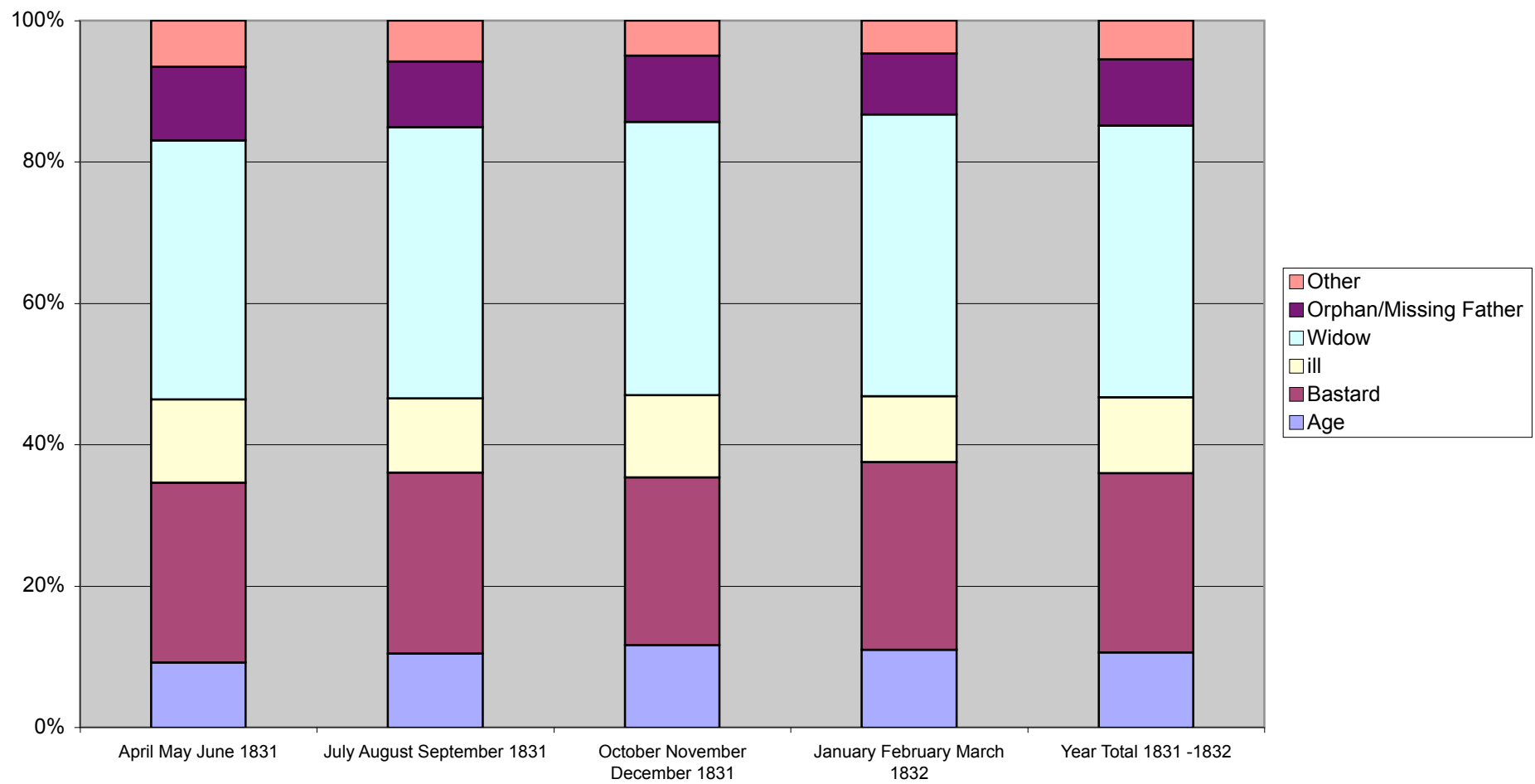
<sup>42</sup> E.H. Hunt, ‘Paupers and pensioners past and present’, *Ageing and Society* 9 (1989), pp.414–15.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, ‘Ageing’, and S.R. Ottaway, ‘Providing for the elderly in eighteenth century England’, *Continuity and Change* 13 (1998) 391–448 also M. Barker-Read, ‘The treatment’ pp.160–94

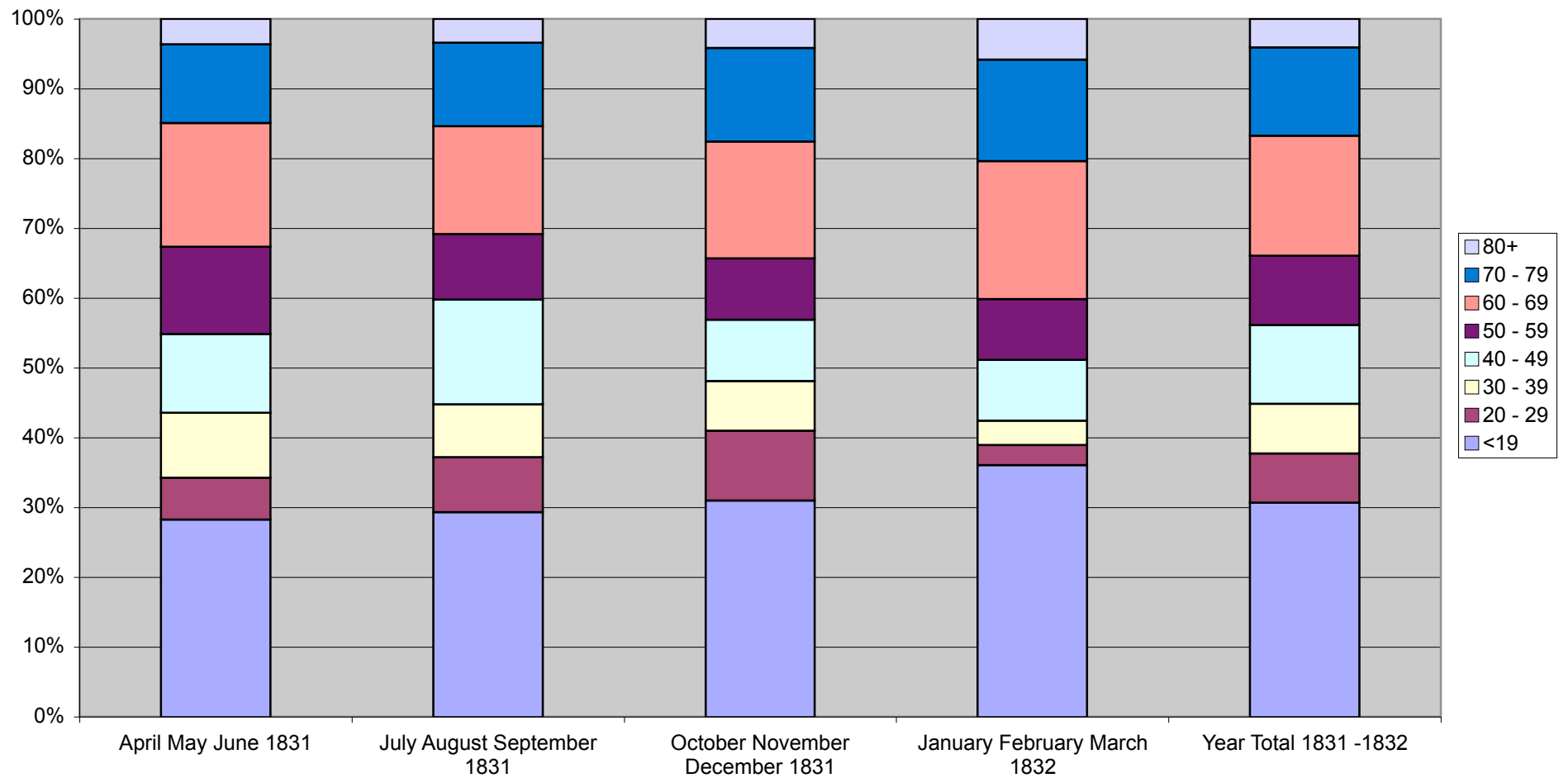
<sup>44</sup> Smith, ‘Ageing’ p.91.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, ‘Ageing’ p. 89 and King, *Poverty* p.175 also M. Barker-Read, ‘The treatment’ pp.160–94.

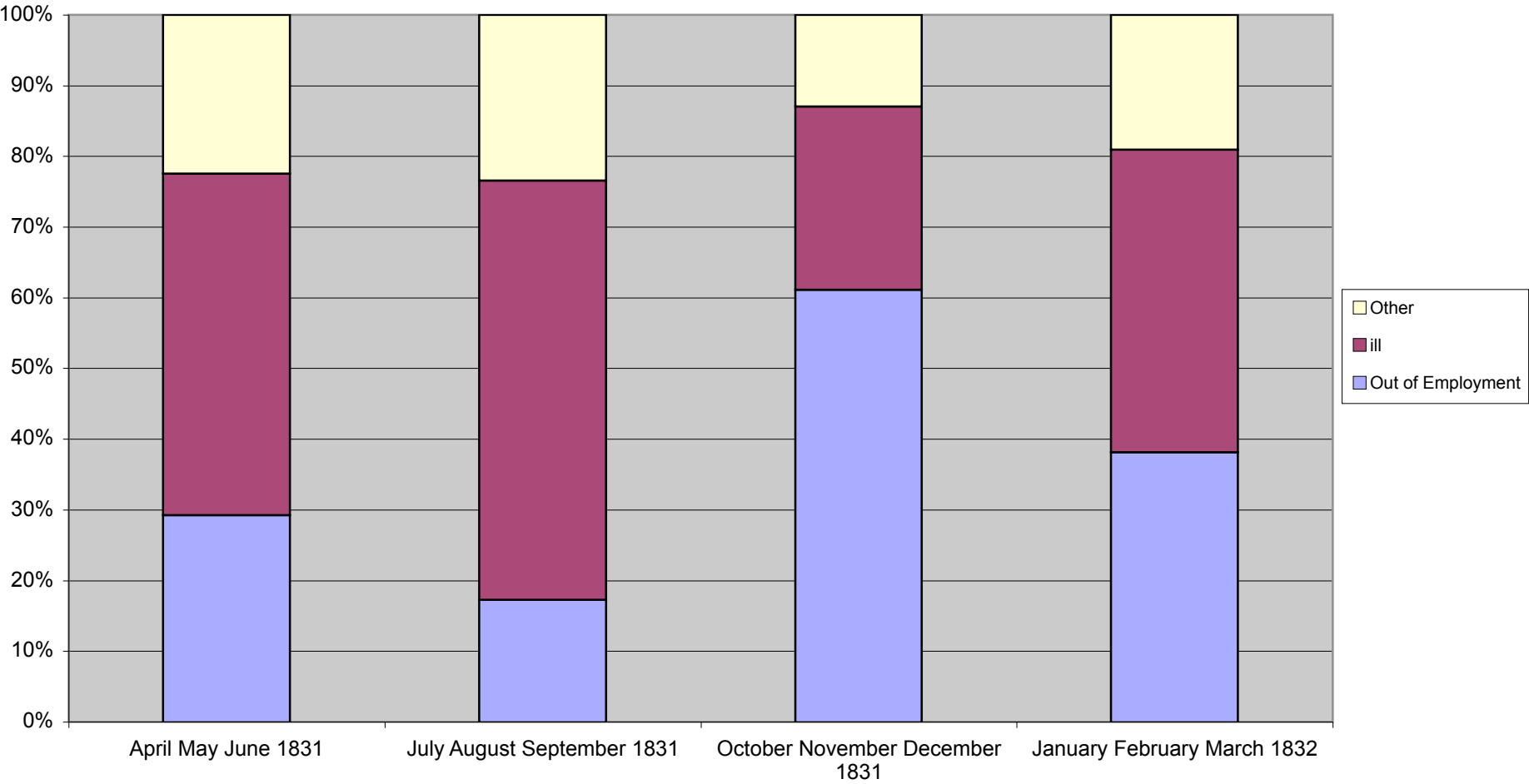
**Graph 4.3 - Chertsey Parish - Reasons for Permanent Relief**



**Graph 4.4 - Chertsey Parish - Breakdown of Permanent Relief Payments by Age**

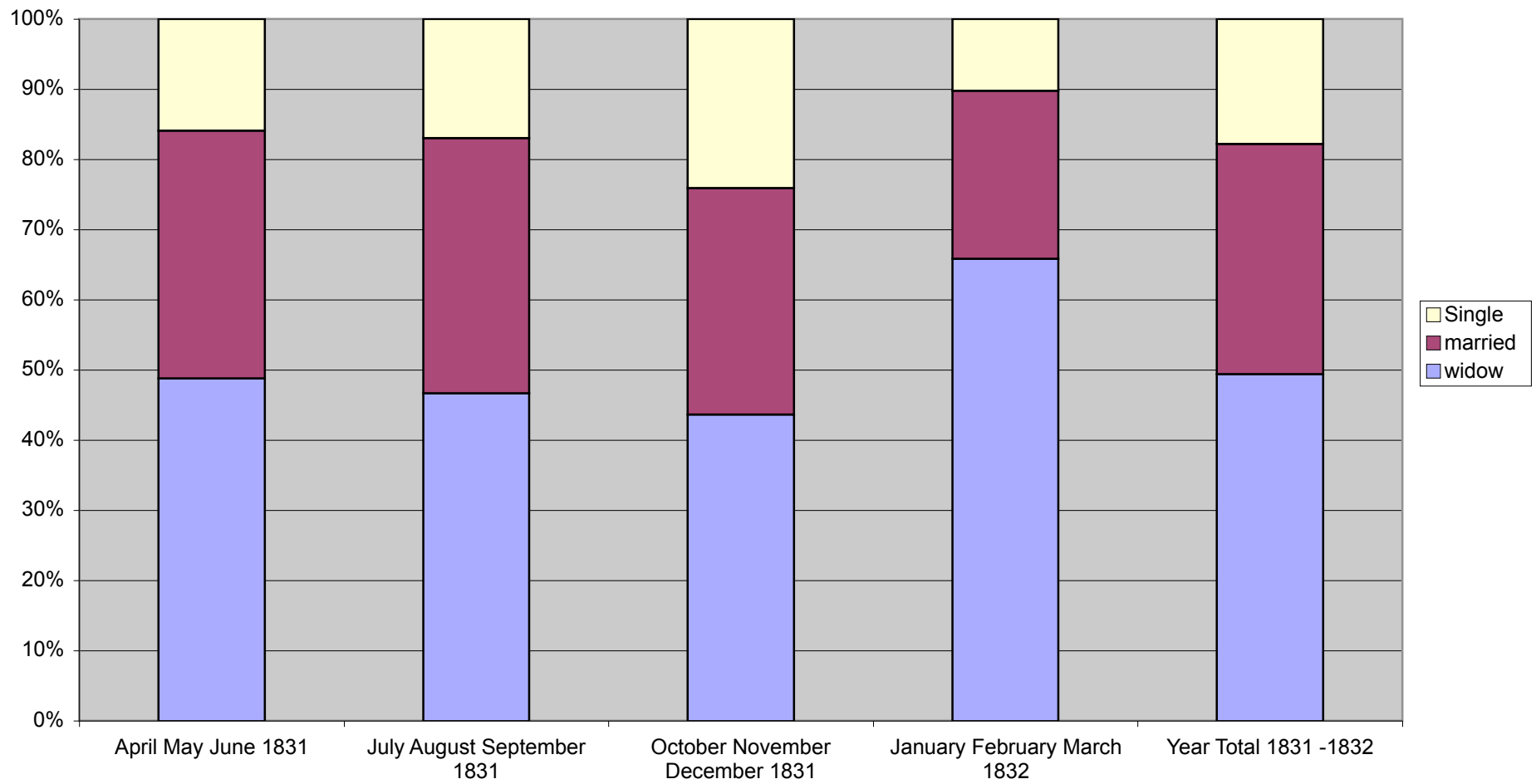


Graph 4.5 - Chertsey Parish - Reason for Temporary Relief

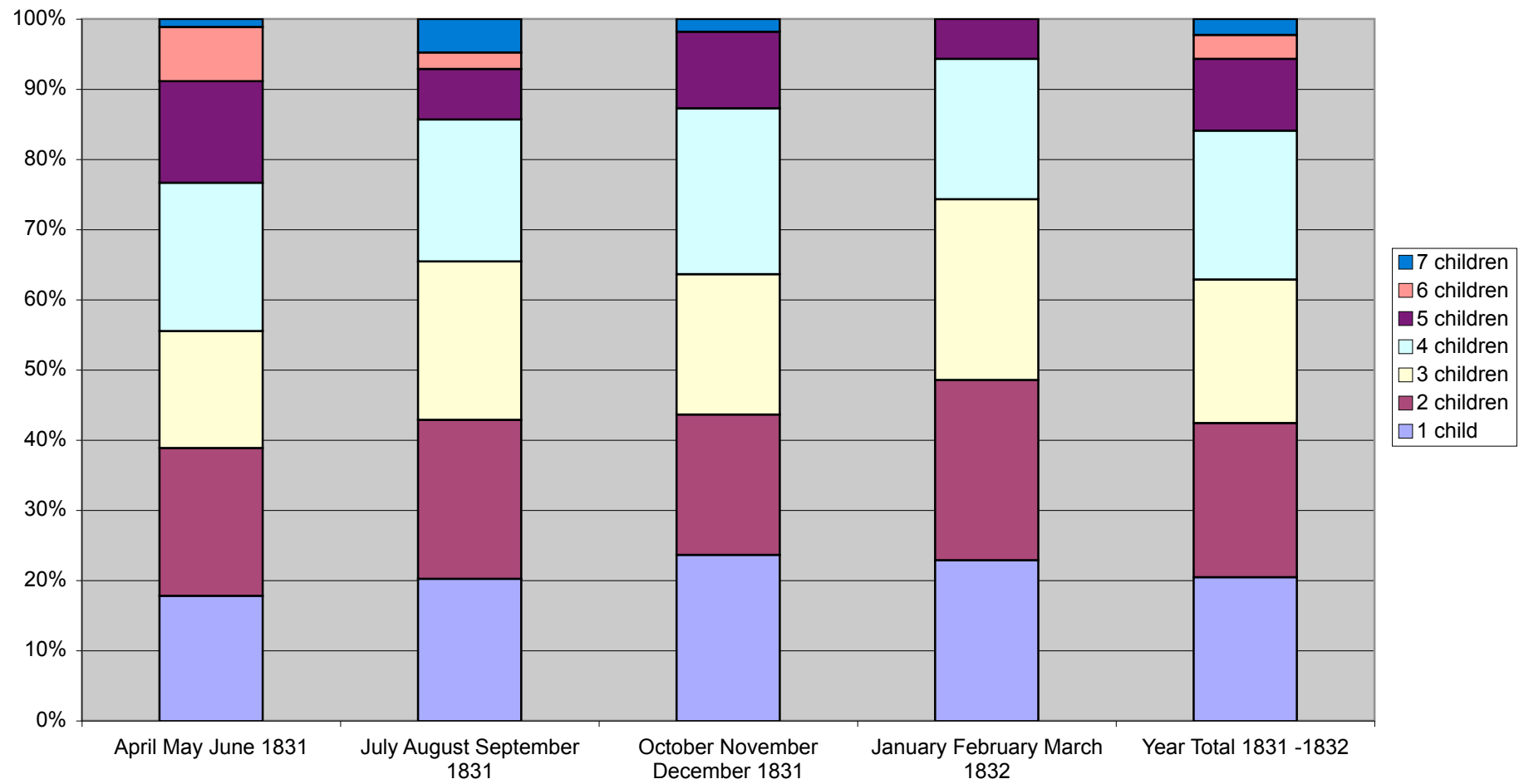




**Graph 4.6 - Chertsey Parish - Breakdown**



**Graph 4.7 - Chertsey Parish - Total Number of Children per Household**



**Graph 4.8 - Capel Parish - Relief Spending 1815 - 1833**

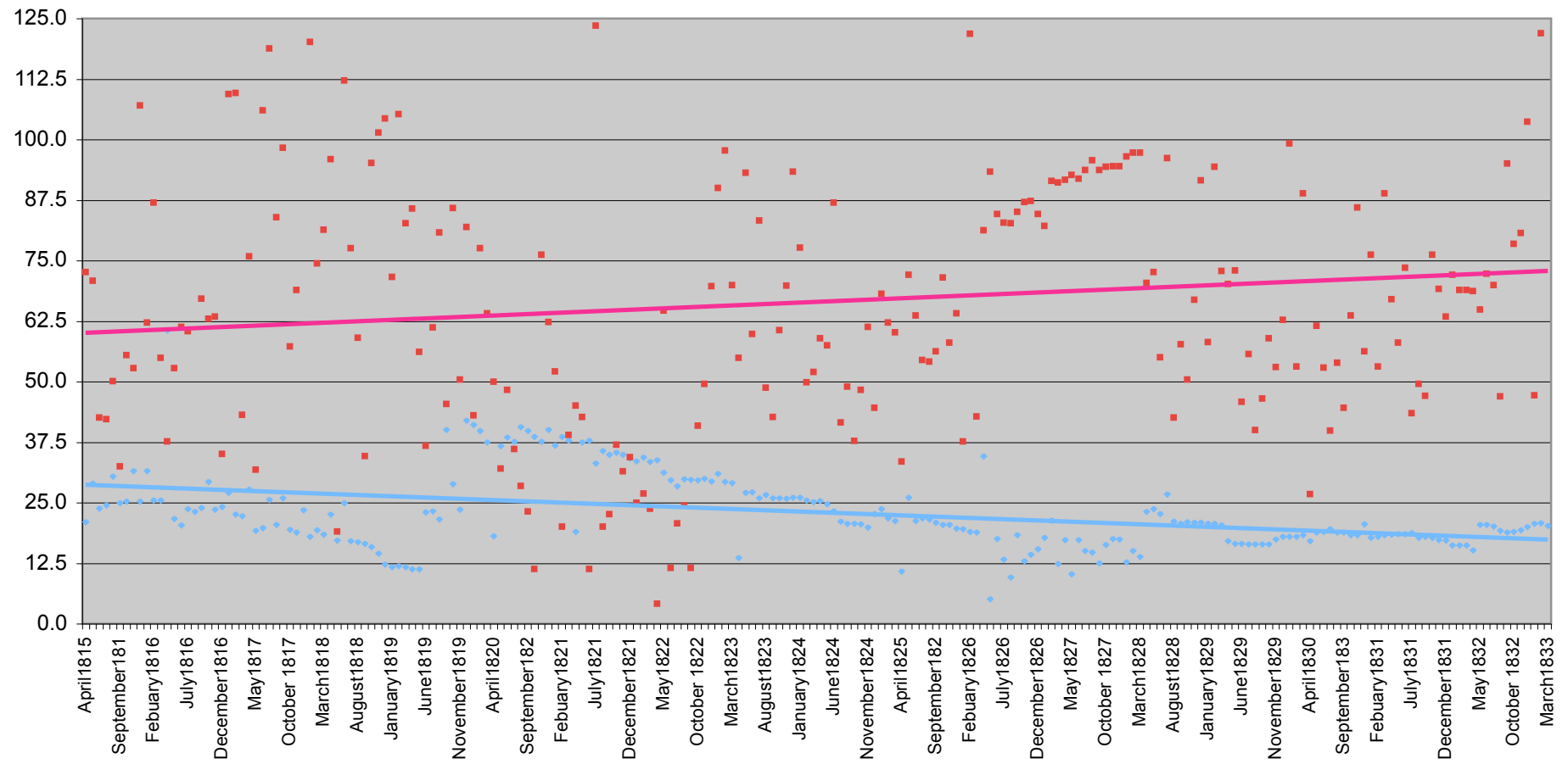


Table 4.9 *Dorking poor relief payments 1822–1834*

Year	Weekly	Casual Relief	Employing The Poor	Totals For Casual Relief And Employing Poor
1822–1823	£1055	£361	£295	£656
1823–1824	£1094	£359	£478	£837
1824–1825	£1050	£374	£454	£828
1825–1826	£1011	£520	£637	£1157
1826–1827	£1047	£464	£665	£1129
1827–1828	£1039	£565	£437	£1002
1828–1829	£1028	£648	£613	£1261
1829–1830	£923	£560	£1086	£1646
1830–1831	£708	£622	£992	£1614
1831–1832	£754	£576	£1009	£1585
1832–1833	£762	£669	£800	£1469
1833–1834	£735	£552	£570	£1122

Source: SHC DOM9/3 part 2 Dorking Vestry Minute Book 1817–30 and part 3 Dorking Vestry Minute Book 1830–43

All parish vestries had to revise their pension lists annually. After the parish of Epsom updated its list in 1834, the vestry agreed to set aside 16<sup>th</sup> May to hear applications from those “who may consider themselves aggrieved” at the changes.<sup>46</sup> The parish of Cobham wanted to print and distribute lists of paupers receiving regular pension payments around the parish at least twice, a year to inform ratepayers of those individuals who were receiving pensions.<sup>47</sup> Although the pension remained the central bulwark against poverty, the permanent poor were not always relieved in this way. There are examples of paupers being relieved in kind, the most common commodities of fuel or bread being given or sold to the poor at reduced prices. The Dorking vestry recommended to the overseers in November 1815 that “relief to the poor at this time be made to them as much as possible

<sup>46</sup> SHC 3132/2/3, ‘Epsom vestry minutes 2 May 1834’.

<sup>47</sup> SHC Box 6/1865/30, ‘Cobham vestry minutes 23 April’.

in flour or other necessary provisions in preference to money.”<sup>48</sup> In April 1825 the Cobham vestry, recognising the high price of bread, agreed that “6d per week be allowed to the widows and illegitimate children in addition to their allowance.”<sup>49</sup> In October 1828 the vestry minutes of Bletchingley record the order to purchase coal and sell it to the poor at reduced prices in winter.<sup>50</sup> Some parishes, moreover, were prepared to allow poor parishioners turfs for firing. The parish of Frimley established a yearly policy to allow poor widows in receipt of relief 3,000 turfs, and poor married men with families, 4,000. The vestry restricted the cutting of the turf on the common to the months May to August. In 1826 thirty-eight people received turf and the workhouse received 10,000 turfs.<sup>51</sup> When the Frimley vestry turned down John Finch application for firing, he informed the vestry that he would cut it himself in defiance of the order. The vestry refused to be intimidated and informed Finch that it would send any turfs cut to the workhouse for the use of the inmates.<sup>52</sup> In addition, in Surrey, as in other counties, those who received pensions also in time of need received other irregular forms of relief such as rent, clothing and shoes.<sup>53</sup> Some parishes also tried to implement a policy of getting some work out of those on weekly pensions. In Egham, widows receiving a weekly allowance had to attend the poor house one day a week to render assistance. Refusal led to the stopping of relief.<sup>54</sup>

### *Out-parish relief*

Overseers had to administer the out-parish relief system and pay allowances to its paupers who lived in other parishes, whether in the vicinity or some distance away. Both Wells and Taylor have found the out-parish relief system well established by the early

<sup>48</sup> SHC DOM/9/3 Part 1, ‘Dorking vestry November 1815’.

<sup>49</sup> SHC Box 6/1865/30, ‘Cobham vestry minutes 4 April 1819’.

<sup>50</sup> SHC P20/2/3, ‘Bletchingley vestry accounts October 1828’.

<sup>51</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, ‘Frimley vestry minutes 16 May 1826’.

<sup>52</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, ‘Frimley 27 June 1826’.

<sup>53</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.57 and Williams, ‘Poor relief’, p.486.

<sup>54</sup> SHC Acc 1493/2, ‘Egham vestry minute book 4 December 1825’.

nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup> This had occurred in Surrey by 1815, although not all of its parishes made a distinction between payments made to out-parish poor and those resident in the parish. This is also the case in other counties.<sup>56</sup> Of course, there were often difficulties relating to the payment of the numerous small pensions. As King notes, for the system to work well it was dependent upon a measure of trust between the parish officials.<sup>57</sup> Many parishes transferred money using the banking system or arranged for payments to be hand delivered. In 1824 the parish of Oxted paid relief payments in the Griffin Inn for a family resident in Hampton.<sup>58</sup> Where separate accounts are kept, it is possible to trace payments made over a period of time (some payments were made on a weekly, monthly or over a longer period of time), as the example of Chertsey, shown in Table 4.10, indicates.

Table 4.10 *Out parish payments April 1831 to March 1832*

Chertsey Payments April 1831–March 1832	Amount Granted Weekly	When Paid
C. Flood and Two children	5s	Paid Every Month
D. Sparran	2s 6d	Paid Every 8 Weeks
F. Dickens	2s 6d	Paid Weekly
W. Rance	6s	Paid Every Fortnight

Source: SHC P2/3/10, Chertsey out-parish payments for the year 1831–1832.

Parishes were often prepared to support non-resident paupers as long as they were assured funds were forthcoming from the parish of settlement. In 1828 an order was obtained to remove James Ansell and his wife from Epsom to Shere, his parish of settlement. It was later suspended due to his illness and on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1828 the

<sup>55</sup> Wells, 'Migration the law and parochial policy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century southern England' *Southern History*, 15 (1997) 104–6, and J. S. Taylor, 'A different kind of Speenhamland: Nonresident relief in the industrial revolution', *Journal of British Studies*, 30 (1991) 185–208 and S. King, "It is impossible for our vestry to judge his case into perfection from here." Managing the distance dimensions of poor relief 1800–40', *Rural History* 16 (2005) 184, also T. Sokoll 'Old age in poverty: the record of Essex pauper letters, 1780–1834 in T. Hitcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharp (eds), *Chronicling Poverty the voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Press), pp. 127–54.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.165

<sup>57</sup> King, "It is impossible", 173.

<sup>58</sup> SHC P3/5/38/15, 'Oxted parish payments 37 weeks £3 14s to Hampton parish November 1828'.

vestry clerk for Epsom wrote to the overseers of Shere: "Ansell's wife has just been here to express her regret at being moved as she has several kind friends at Epsom. I can only add that if your parish will pay the expenses incurred under the order of suspension and send me an acknowledgement that the pauper settlement is at Shere we have no particular reason to remove the family."<sup>59</sup> At the same time there were often disputes between parishes over the non-or late payment of allowances. Overseers spent considerable time and resources administering the collection of payments. In 1830 Sarah Earle wrote to the overseers in Farnham: "I humbly hope you will pardon me troubling you but I have not received any relief these last five weeks."<sup>60</sup> If the money was not forthcoming, parish officials would often threaten removal of the family from their parish. In 1834 William Earle, his pregnant wife and six children were in this predicament. The overseers of Old Brentford, in Ealing sent a letter to the parish of Farnham asking for the relief payments "to prevent the necessity of a removal from Ealing."<sup>61</sup> At the same time parish overseers could be extremely patient when funds were not forthcoming. There was a long running dispute over late payments between the overseers in Whitby and the overseers in Albury concerning the Hall family. In 1822 the overseers in Whitby were extremely anxious to settle the outstanding account:

"I shall esteem myself obliged if you will have the goodness to send me the amount soon as convenient as I am now twenty-one weeks in arrears and wishful to have my accounts passed in September."<sup>62</sup>

It appears that the account was not settled, for several more letters followed. In November 1823 the outstanding debt stood at £20 and only then did the overseers demand payment

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<sup>59</sup> SHC PSH/SHER/28/71, 'W. Everest letter Shere vestry minutes 6 August 1827'.

<sup>60</sup> SHC FP1/3/3 A18, 'Letter Farnham vestry minutes 1830'.

<sup>61</sup> SHC FP1/3/3D45, 'Letter Farnham vestry minutes 1834'.

<sup>62</sup> SHC 3624/4/34, 'Letter overseers Whitby September 1822'.

or the removal of the family.<sup>63</sup> Another method used by parish overseers to recover late payments was to refuse further assistance to the recipients. When the overseers of Albury owed £3 15s, three years costs “for the cure of Mrs Hillier’s leg,” they were informed she would receive no further treatment until the outstanding bill was settled.<sup>64</sup> In 1833 Elizabeth Gibb wrote to the parish officers in Oxted to plead with them to pay the outstanding account as the parish of Richmond had refused her any further assistance.<sup>65</sup> Even when finally settling accounts, parishes would sometimes pay reluctantly or would refuse to settle bills in full. In March 1830 the overseers of Farnham sent a draft for £7 13s to the overseers of the parish of Saint Lukes Middlesex the “amount of your account against this parish for money advanced to the family of Dunham.” They added that the guardians of the poor consider the doctor’s bill “too much.”<sup>66</sup> Sometimes parish officials required out-parishioners to return to the parish of settlement to verify their circumstances but usually they depended on the parish officials from the non-resident parish to keep them fully informed of any change of circumstance. In August 1827 widow Bristow was asked to return to the parish of Shere for a meeting with the overseers who wanted to verify that she still required their assistance. The Esher vestry clerk intervened and wrote that “she has called this morning requesting me to write to state her inability to accomplish the journey, she is very heavy (with dropsy), I am informed, and cannot walk far at a time and says she has no money to pay coach hire, and even if she could get to Guildford she could not walk to Shere.”<sup>67</sup> Parish officials on occasion were also prepared to support paupers in requesting increased allowances. The Storrington vestry clerk wrote to the Oxted overseers and supported the Ware family “in every way a most excellent character and exceedingly hard-working.” The mother “was afflicted” and there were five young children in the family, and on the earnings of the husband they were

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<sup>63</sup> SHC 3624/4/34, ‘Letter overseers Whitby 18 November 1823’.

<sup>64</sup> SHC 3624/4/3a, ‘Letter overseers? to Albury overseers 1821’.

<sup>65</sup> SHC P3/5/40/9, ‘Letter Elizabeth Gibb to Oxted overseers 25 June 1833’.

<sup>66</sup> SHC FP1/3/3, ‘Letter Farnham vestry minutes 1830’.

<sup>67</sup> SHC PSH/SHER28/7 1, ‘Letter Shere vestry minutes 1827’.



unable to pay the doctor's fees.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, with much of this correspondence, the responses are not known and only where the decision of the overseer is written on the letter or a further letter is received can one track through the correspondence.

*Granting relief to the able-bodied*

The able-bodied poor are extremely difficult to classify as there are the underemployed and the unemployed, as well as many contributory factors to long-term and short-term poverty. On the other hand, one should not overdraw the divisions between the able-bodied and impotent poor because "relief of the able-bodied poor was in many cases a product of the life cycle and demographic regime. The income of the nuclear family came under pressure with the birth of more children and entered a period of deficit until children could contribute or left home."<sup>69</sup>

The legislation of 1601 stressed the need to solve the problem of unemployment and its consequent evils by providing a stock of materials to set the able-bodied poor to work. This was difficult to operate as the parishes would have to raise funds for the start of the project and overseers would then have to devote time to manage them. By 1815 the only evidence of such enterprises in Surrey was that concerning manufacture within workhouses' and by this time cash payments to those outside the workhouse had become the norm. In 1782 Gilbert's Act had sanctioned the principle of relieving the "able-bodied" outside the workhouse, and vestries keen to foster habits of industry provided work for them. By the early nineteenth century the question of providing relief to the able-bodied dominated the debate over the operation of the poor laws. At a time when the magnitude of the increase in relief costs became apparent and contemporary opinion demanded a

<sup>68</sup> SHC P3/J/39/12, 'Letter from Storrington vestry to Oxted vestry 10 March.'

<sup>69</sup> M.J. Daunt, *Progress and poverty: An economic and social history of Britain 1700–1850* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), p.453.

much stricter policy towards the aid given to the able-bodied poor, the latter were deemed to be almost entirely responsible for the high level of poor relief expenditure.<sup>70</sup>

Contemporaries, including Malthus, often condemned poor relief as contributing towards population growth and claimed that it weakened “one of the strongest incentives to sobriety and industry and consequently to happiness.”<sup>71</sup> Many believed that high levels of public welfare spending weakened the initiative and the desire to work and promoted general disorder in parishes.<sup>72</sup> Governmental select committees constantly urged magistrates to consider the character of the applicant before granting an appeal.<sup>73</sup> It was also accepted that granting poor relief should not do away with the need for self-reliance and it was desirable that individuals should work for their subsistence.

By the 1820s the depression in agriculture and the rise of population in rural Surrey had created almost a permanent pauperised, unemployed workforce. It is therefore easy to identify the growing problem of relieving the able-bodied poor in the vestry minute books by reference to the lengthening lists of unemployed men requesting relief, especially in winter months. Able-bodied men, hitherto only forced to go to the parish in times of sickness, were now becoming regular recipients of relief. King has observed “more and more able-bodied men and families needed communal help from the 1790s, the safety net was there.”<sup>74</sup> Henry Drummond stated in his evidence to the Select Committee on Labourers Wages in 1824 that “the rent of cottages is so high that it is one of the chief causes of the agricultural labourers being in a worse state now than they ever were.”<sup>75</sup> He also replied, when asked if able-bodied labourers might be totally independent of parish

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.455.

<sup>71</sup> D. Winch(ed), T. R. Malthus, *An essay on the principles of population: or a view of its past and present effects on human happiness; with an inquiry into our prospects respecting the future removal or mitigation of the evils which it occasions* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 100.

<sup>72</sup> Thomson, ‘The welfare of the elderly’. p. 216.

<sup>73</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Poor Laws VI 1817, pp.22–3 and Select Committee on Poor Laws II 1819 pp.3–4 also Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers’ Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, p.8.

<sup>74</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 57.

<sup>75</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers’ Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, Report H. Drummond p.47 BPP.

relief, "it is quite impossible that they can; the number of persons out of work is so great."<sup>76</sup> In 1828 Sir Robert Peel had noted that the low wheat stocks and the fear of a poor harvest would deplete the stock further and urged that "the government should give its attention to the matter" to avert a crisis.<sup>77</sup> In fact, the situation was made worse after the three consecutive poor harvests of 1828-30 which, by reducing peak earnings at harvest time, jeopardised the customary source for labourers to meet annual Michaelmas house-rent payments and buy replacement clothing and footwear for their families. As Moses Duck, an assistant overseer for the parish of Egham noted, labourers were unable

"to pay their rent and furnish clothes. This is a serious loss occasioned to the country, and the peasantry, once a cheerful and industrious race, from the operation of circumstances beyond their control are become very destitute and dependent, and branded with the degrading epithet of pauper."<sup>78</sup>

In 1829 a petition was presented to the House of Commons from the inhabitants of Middlesex and Surrey "deeply affected with the prevalence of national distress, especially the alarming privations of the industrious classes of the community."<sup>79</sup> Mr Martin, a surgeon of forty years, standing in Reigate, stressed the "increasing degradation and wretchedness of the farming labourers" as a result of "the disproportion between the wages of labour and the prices of the necessaries of life."<sup>80</sup>

In Surrey, Charles Barclay, chairman of the Dorking vestry, complained that "during the winters of 1831 and 1832 there were constantly between seventy and eighty persons

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> SHC 304/A1/Box, 'Letter Peel to Goulbourn 4 August 1828'.

<sup>78</sup> J. Marriage, *Letters on the distressed state of agricultural labourers* (Chelmsford, Meggy and Chalk, 1830).

<sup>79</sup> NA Journal of the House of Commons, 1829, Vol 85.

<sup>80</sup> SHC 325/1/2, 'Letter from Dr Martin to the committee of the Useful Knowledge Society 1829'.

employed by this parish, either upon the roads or in the gravel pits.”<sup>81</sup> In 1833 the depressed state of the labour market meant that in the parish of Ewhurst “owing to sickness, bad weather and scarcity of employment a labourer would be without work “from eight to twelve weeks in a year.”<sup>82</sup> The 1833 government inquiry into the state of agriculture produced evidence of general distress. Mr Drewitt, a farmer from Guildford, reported on the increase of unemployed labourers in the area and Mr Smallpiece from Cobham commented “now we have a great number of surplus labourers.”<sup>83</sup>

Parish vestries shared a vision that low rates and an industrious, gainfully employed labour force were important aims, but providing employment for an expanding redundant labour force was proving more difficult to achieve. In 1828 the Select Committee into employment or relief of able-bodied persons reported that many southern parishes assisted approximately one-fourth of labourers and their families at certain times in the year<sup>84</sup>. By 1834 the worsening situation had led to “the emergence of endemic structural poverty amongst rural labourers in the South and East, in which labour oversupply combined with ever more intense seasonality in labour demand.”<sup>85</sup> In winter months the number of labourers unable to find work increased, and by the 1830s many rural parishes were finding poor relief expenditure granted to the able-bodied exceeded the 7% county average.<sup>86</sup> King suggests up to forty per cent of a local population might be at any time be classed as poor and by the late 1820s the figure might be higher.<sup>87</sup> This can be seen in the parish of Dorking’s accounts for the years 1830–1833 give a detailed breakdown of payments to the able-bodied and Table 4.11 clearly shows for these years a large

<sup>81</sup> C. Barclay, ‘Address to the inhabitants of Dorking’ in *Letters from Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada in the Spring 1832*, (London and Dorking, 1833), p.6.

<sup>82</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX Replies to Question 10 Reply Ewhurst p. 480a .

<sup>83</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural V 1833, Evidence T. Drewitt p.482–83 and Evidence G. Smallpiece p.614.

<sup>84</sup> Report on the Select Committee on the Relief of Able-Bodied Persons for the Poor Rates IV 1828, p.5.

<sup>85</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.126.

<sup>86</sup> Minutes of Evidence before Committee of the House of Lord VIII 1830 –1, Tabular Statement the Comparative Ability of the Several Counties in England to support their Agricultural Population pp.246–8.

<sup>87</sup> King, *Poverty*, pp. 77–110.

proportion of poor relief expenditure was spent on the able-bodied, either in casual relief or in employing them.<sup>88</sup>

Table 4.11 *Dorking relief payments for the able-bodied 1830–1833*

Year	Casual Relief	Employing Poor	Total Spent In Relief For The Period	Percentage Of Funds To The Able-Bodied
March–September 1830	£306 6s 7d	£452 2s 10d	£758 9s 5d	34%
September–March 1831	£315 17s 10d	£539 16s	£855 13s 10d	41%
March–September 1831	£290 10s	£337 13s 10d	£1764 1s 11d	36%
September–March 1832	£285 6s 3d	£67 19s 11d	£2048 8s 2d	47%
March–September 1832	£326 0s 2d	£384 0s 11d	£2210 8s 9d	32%
September–March 1833	£342 10s 10d	£415 14s 5d	£2079 15s 1d	36%
March–September 1833	£280 6s 9d	£164 10s 8d	£444 17s 6d	23%

Source: SHC DOM/9/3 Dorking Vestry Minutes 1799–1843

In the parish of Byfleet in October 1829 the vestry instructed the assistant overseer not to grant relief without an order from the magistrate or the vestry, not to give single men more than 2s per week, and the assistant overseer was not to find work for such persons. He was only to find work for men with large families and, “those who from age and other infirmities cannot earn enough in the summer to support them when out of employment.”<sup>89</sup>

### *Providing relief*

Rural parishes in Surrey adopted different methods for making cash payments to the unemployed or underemployed agricultural labourer. The overwhelming impression created by the parish records is one of great difficulty, as parishes tried to break the spiral of increasing wages bills with the consequent pressure on the rates. Blaug has used the Replies to the Commissioners published in the 1834 Report to show the different ways parishes provided outdoor relief, and suggests that there was no allowance system operating in rural Surrey.<sup>90</sup> He does, however, point out that the tabulation of answers from the Report does present problems for the historian because the “questions were

<sup>88</sup> SHC DOM/9/3/ Part 1, 'Dorking vestry minutes accounts 26 March 1830–25 March 1831'.

<sup>89</sup> SHC BY/8/1, 'Byfleet vestry accounts October 1829'.

<sup>90</sup> M. Blaug, 'The poor law report re-examined', *The Journal of Economic History*, 24 (1964) 229–45.

poorly framed and the respondents were given licence to answer as they pleased: often the replies were ambiguous or irrelevant and sometimes the questions were not answered.”<sup>91</sup> Table 4.12 below is Blaug’s analysis of the commissioners’ report for Surrey

Table 4.12 *Surrey answers to the Rural Queries 1833*

1		Total Number Of Rural Parishes	146
2		Percentage Of Rural Parishes Reporting	18
3		Total County Population In 1831 (in 000's)	491
4		Percentage Of Population Reporting	12
5		Poor Relief Per Head In 1831 (s.d.)	10.11
6	% of Reporting Parishes	With Disguised Unemployment	48
7		Giving Allowances In Aid of Wages	0
8		Giving Children Allowances	55
9		Using Bread Scale	10
10		Using Roundsman System	3
11		Using Labour Rate	0
12		Paying More To Married Men	14
13		With Declining Productivity of Labour	76

Source: Table 1 Replies to the Poor Law Commissioners 1834 (9) XXVII, M. Blaug, 'The poor law report re-examined' *The Journal of Economic History* 24 (1964), 237.

To try to gain a comprehensive picture of the various policies used by overseers to support able-bodied paupers in rural Surrey it is important to include information in vestry minute books, as dependence on the commissioners’ replies can be misleading. Overseers had to adopt various policies to deal with the problem to raise enough money and then find methods of making full use of the labourers they were supporting. For example, no parish in Surrey informed the commissioners that they gave allowances in aid of wages and no parish said that they used a labour rate. This is misleading as there were rural parishes that made no return but did grant this type of relief,<sup>92</sup> five of which were used in rural Surrey: allowances in aid of wages; payments to labourers with large families; the roundsman system; the labour rate; parish work schemes, and the sixth, the workhouse system, which will be dealt with in Chapter Five.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 229–30.

<sup>92</sup> G. Boyer, *An economic history of the English poor law* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.10.

*Allowance in aid of wages: child allowance*

This system guaranteed an employed or unemployed labourer a minimum weekly income, determined by the level of the price of bread and the size of the labourer's family. Surrey did not introduce the Speenhamland system, but men received enough relief to raise their total income to the level thought appropriate in each case, depending on the number of family members. Parishes in southern England regularly used this form of child allowance during the early nineteenth century, and more than 90% of the southern parishes that responded to the 1824 Committee on Labourers' Wages admitted to operating a child allowance policy.<sup>93</sup> Many at the time were very critical of this expedient, deemed to be responsible for a burdensome surplus population. Malthus claimed that child allowances caused the birth rate to increase as they encouraged many single labourers to marry early and produce a family in order to receive a higher allowance.<sup>94</sup> Family men were hired more frequently to defray the costs of his family's maintenance.<sup>95</sup>

In 1825 various Surrey parishes, including those in the hundreds of Copthorne, Effingham Reigate Hundreds and in the Godstone and Guildford Divisions, reportedly operated child allowance policies, although the returns do not include full details.<sup>96</sup> More than 64% of Surrey parishes that responded to the Poor Law Commissioners declared that they operated a child allowance, policy and the parish of Albury stated that families were paid relief as "wives and children must not starve to death."<sup>97</sup> Some Surrey parishes that did not make a return as, for example, Shere, nonetheless employed a child allowance

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>94</sup> Huzel J.P. 'Malthus the poor law and population in the early nineteenth century England', *Economic History Review*, 22 (1969), pp. 431–2 and S. Webb and B. Webb, *English poor law History Part II: the last hundred years 1* (London, Frank Cass, 1963), pp.5–6.

<sup>95</sup> Report of the Select Committee on the Employment or Relief of Able Bodied Persons from the Poor Rate IV 1828, p. 7.

<sup>96</sup> Abstract of Returns on Labourers' Wages XIX 1825 Question 3 p. 44.

<sup>97</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 26 Reply Albury p.475b.

scheme.<sup>98</sup> The policy varied from parish to parish as parishes operated a system according to their own scale (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13 *Child allowance policy from replies to the poor law commissioners for Surrey*

Year	Parish	Scale of Relief For Families With Dependent Children
1825	Horley	4 Children 2s Per Week 5 " 3s " 6 " 4s "
1830	Shere	Child Allowance 1s Per Week For First 2 Children Subsequent Children 1s 6d Per Week
1833	Albury	All Children Over 4 Years 1s 6d per Week (If Father's Earnings Were Below 10s Per Week)
1833	Chobham	1 Child 1s per week 2 Children 2s " 3 " 3s " 1s 6d Per Week Each Additional Child
1833	Egham	6s To Single Man Per Week 7s To Married Couple With 1 Child 1s per week With 2 children 2s " With 3 " 3s 6d " With 4 " 5s
1833	Ewhurst	Over 3 Children In The Family 1s 6d Per Week
1833	Farnham	1 Child (Over 3 Years) 1s 6d per week 2 Children 3s " 3 " 4s 6d "
1833	Great Bookham	2s Per Week Begins At 5 Children
1833	Guildford St Nicholas	Allowance Begins At 3 Children At 1s 6d Per Head
1833	Lingfield	4 Children 2s 6d Per Week In Winter " 1s 6d " In Summer
1833	Newdigate	All Children Over 4 Years 1s 6d Per Week
1833	Wallington	1s Per Child Per Week Until Allowance Amounts To 10s Per Week (Allowance Single Man 5s, Man And wife 6s Per Week)

Source: SHC P30/5/2 Horley Vestry Minutes 22 October 1825; Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 22, Replies from Albury, Chobham, Egham, Ewhurst, Farnham, Great Bookham, Guildford St Nicholas, Lingfield, Newdigate and Wallington pp.474–86.

After 1827 the parish of Farnham tried to reduce the allowance to families by ordering all children between the ages of ten to twelve years to work (spinning).<sup>99</sup> Some parishes preferred to board out children and pay their carers a regular allowance. In the parish of Capel older children usually lived out of the workhouse and parishioners were paid for their care (see Table 4.14).

<sup>98</sup> SHC SHER/8/1, 'Shere resolution book 1 February 1830'.

<sup>99</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 39 Reply Farnham p.480d .



Table 4.14 *Capel parish the scale of charges for children living outside the workhouse 1817–1822*

Age	Payments Per Week
10 Years and under	2s 6d Per Week
11 Years	2s Per Week
12 Years	1s 6d Per Week
13 Years	1s Per Week
14 Years	Nothing But Clothes

Source: SHC P39/3/5 Capel Vestry Minutes (back of the book) details scheme 1814 no details; 1815, 1817, 1821 complete; 1816, 1818, 1819, 1820, 1822 incomplete

The scheme operated from 1814–1822 and for 1817 there is a full listing (see table 4.15).

Table 4.15 *Capel parish children taken for care by parishioners for the year 25 March 1817 to 24 March 1818*

Parishioner	Child	Age	Scale Of Charges Paid To Parishioners Per week and Total Per Annum
Master Strudwick	Elizabeth Weller	12 yrs	1s 6d Total £3 18s
John Christmas	William Palmer	13 yrs	1s Total £2 12s
B. Flint	William Charman	11 yrs	2s Total £5 4s
W. Hanberry	Henry Field	11 yrs	2s Total £5 4s
W. Swan	Henry Weller	13 yrs	1s Total £2 12s
Samuel Crews Junior	William May	14 yrs	Parish to cloth him
Thomas Barnett	Sarah Bachelor	11 yrs	2s Total £5 4s
John Weller	Rebecca May	12 yrs	1s 6d Total £3 18s
Richard Charman	John Palmer	11 yrs	2s Total £5 4s
Samuel Crew	Hannah Dudney	13 yrs	1s Total £2 12s
William Randall	Jason Sayer	12 yrs	1s 6d Total £3 18s
Anthony Smith	Sarah Bachelor	12 yrs	2s Total £5 4s
Isaac Ellis	Mary Sayer	13 yrs	1s Total £2 12s
George Comfort	Rebecca Weller	9 yrs	2s 6d Total £3 18s
William Sayer Junior	Sarah Skilton	12 yrs	2s 6d Total £3 18s
Richard Charman	Sarah Botting	12yrs	1 <sup>st</sup> June 1817 to 24 <sup>th</sup> March 1818 1s 6d Total £3 3s
Mary Street	June Potter	12 yrs	April 1817 to 24th March 1818 Total £3 15s
Total For The Year			£60 18s

Source: SHC P39/3/5, Capel Vestry Minutes

In 1817 the parish of Chertsey operated an allowance system on a scale set by local magistrates, allowing every man, woman and child in a family “to make up their wages equal to two quartern loaves per head per week, all at 3s a week as nearly as possible.”<sup>100</sup>

The authorities regarded these wage subsidies as temporary, payable until a man found

<sup>100</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Poor Laws VI 1817, Evidence T. Lacoast p. 109.

work, until his wages rose or his family responsibilities lessened, or until seasonal or economic changes brought about improved employment prospects.

### *Allowance in aid of wages*

The traditional view of the allowance system maintained that it was by far the most widespread form of outdoor relief, and in 1817, 1824, 1828 and 1833 the select committees reported the allowance system was being used throughout the south of England.<sup>101</sup> Although the parish responses to questions 24 and 25 of the 1832 Rural Queries and question 1 of the 1824 Select Committee on Labourers' wages refute this assumption. Only 41% of the parishes or districts that responded to the 1824 questionnaire admitted paying allowances in aid of wages, and from the returns for Surrey only the Guildford division openly confirmed payment of allowances in aid of wages.<sup>102</sup> Copthorne, Effingham, Godstone and Reigate Hundreds declared that they only helped married labourers with families.<sup>103</sup> Blaug states then "we may suppose ...fewer parishes practised outdoor relief to the able-bodied in 1824 than in previous years."<sup>104</sup> But Boyer points out that Blaug's conclusion follows only "if one assumes that the allowance system represented the sole form of outdoor relief".<sup>105</sup> As this chapter clearly demonstrates, in time of need paupers were helped in very many different ways. The use of allowances in aid of wages declined sharply from 1824 to 1832: only 7% of parishes responding to the Rural Queries stated they used allowance systems in 1832. From 1824 to 1832 the

<sup>101</sup> J. Hammond and B. Hammond, *The village labourer* (London, Longmans Green and Company, 1920 reprint), p.161 and p.164, and K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1944), p.78, and Report of the Select Committee on Poor Laws VI 1817, pp. 4 and 16, and Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, p. 5, and Abstract of Returns on Labourers' Wages 1825, XIX p. 44 and Report on the Relief of Able-bodied Persons for the Poor Rates IV 1828, pp. 5–6 also Report on Agriculture 1833, V pp. vi–vii.

<sup>102</sup> Abstract of Returns on Labourers' Wages XIX 1825, Question 3 p.44 and Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 25 and 26 pp. 474b–88b.

<sup>103</sup> Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, p. 40, and Abstract of Returns on Labourers' Wages 1825 XIX Question 3 p.44 Report on the Employment or Relief of Able Bodies Persons 1828 p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> M. Blaug, 'The myth of the old poor law and the making of the new', *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963) 160.

<sup>105</sup> Boyer, *An economic*, pp. 11–12

decline in the use of allowances in aid of wages apparently had an effect on relief expenditure, because *per capita* real relief expenditure in England and Wales increased by 10%.<sup>106</sup>

The allowance system represented a cost minimizing policy for farmers as it enabled them to lower the nominal wage rates they paid their labourers and hence pass some of the labour costs on to other ratepayers. The non-labour hiring ratepayers (for example, small shopkeepers and small family farmers) disliked the allowance system because they felt they were subsidising the wage bill of local farmers. The major difference between the allowance system and the other forms of relief was that the allowance system provided relief not only for seasonally unemployed labourers but also for fully employed labourers whose wage income fell below a minimum level. The parish of Horley in November 1826 received an application from George Young and others for some temporary relief, which argued that the trenching work on the Duke of Gloucester's land paid insufficient wages for them to maintain their families. After investigation the vestry directed the assistant overseer to relieve them.<sup>107</sup> On the other hand, there is evidence of parishes refusing to make up wages. In 1820, the parish of Frimley declined to augment the wages of William Parker when he applied for a sum of 8 or 10s.<sup>108</sup> In December 1825 the parish of Horley resolved that "persons labouring on the highway be paid what is considered proper wages and not be obliged to apply to the overseers for part of their wages, which is illegal."<sup>109</sup> Because of the small size of the parishes, overseers usually knew the employment situation of each applicant and could assess the situation before granting or refusing relief.<sup>110</sup> Hostility to the allowance system became evident in the post-war crisis of declining grain prices and rising rate burdens, whereas during the Napoleonic wars most people had accepted it.

<sup>106</sup> K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p.48.

<sup>107</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley vestry minutes 12 December 1826'.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, '24 January 1820'.

<sup>109</sup> SHC P30/5/2, 'Horley vestry minutes 14 December 1825'.

<sup>110</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley vestry minutes March 1820'.

Several assistant Poor Law Commissioners argued in 1834 that parishes had adopted allowance systems during the times of high prices because the allowance system was “the only practicable alternative to enforcing by law a definite minimum wage.”<sup>111</sup> The Poor law Assistant Commissioners reporting on Surrey stated that they found it difficult to establish how many parishes operated an allowance system. Nineteen of the twenty-two replies gave details of allowances, but only in relation to large families. Majendie reported that in the parish of Horne labourers went to work for a gentleman in Bletchingly at a rate of 6s a week and the remainder of their salary was made up out of the rates by the overseer of Horne. This meant that the parish heavily subsidised their wages of approximately 12s, the sum for a married man with a family.<sup>112</sup> Even so, the threat of the workhouse was usually enough to keep labourers from abusing the system and overseers in the county often refused relief to applicants if agricultural employment was available. There are also examples of parishes refusing relief until labourers could provide evidence that farmers had no employment.<sup>113</sup>

### *Roundsman system*

To receive parish relief and to discourage voluntary unemployment, vestries often insisted that relief recipients had to perform work for the parish. Under the operation of the roundsman system overseers sent seasonally unemployed labourers “on the rounds” to employers in the parish to do whatever work they could find. The parish then made up the difference between the labourer’s wage income and subsistence. This system relieved the parish of the obligation of supervising the labour, as was necessary in the quarries and on the roads. Historians have criticised the roundsman system for forcing non-labour

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<sup>111</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English poor law History Part II: the last hundred years 1* (London, Longmans Green and Company, 1929), p.61.

<sup>112</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey A. Majendie p.174A.

<sup>113</sup> SHC 3132/2/4, ‘Epsom vestry minutes, 15 April 1816, 14 March 1817’, and 2253/11/1, ‘Godalming vestry minutes 16 December 1829’.

hiring ratepayers to pay part of the wages bill of their richer neighbours. It could also result in the decline of labourers' wages in winter months as "a farmer would not pay a man 10s a week when he could employ the roundsman at half that sum."<sup>114</sup> In Surrey the roundsman system was familiar but not intensively used. In December 1817 the parish of Bletchingley sent unemployed labourers "round" to the different occupiers of lands and houses, and the vestry set down a scale of labour costs, with instructions that a single man should not receive more than 6d a day and a married man, 12d.<sup>115</sup> Maclean commented in his report that, as the volume of surplus labour increased, sending men in search of employment was pointless. Not only did it fail in its objective, but it also "seems never to have given satisfaction to either party "employer or employee".<sup>116</sup> Only two parishes, Farnham and Godstone, reported to the commissioners that they had used the roundsman system in the past but had not practised it "lately". All other parishes making returns stated it had never operated.<sup>117</sup>

### *Parish work*

An alternative, if similar, system was to make relief dependent upon parish-provided work. Unfortunately, this scheme was very difficult to operate simply because it was not always possible to give people profitable work in agriculture when there was so little work. Some parishes required all labour-hiring farmers to take on a share of the unemployed labourers, whereas others adopted a totally voluntary system. This often caused resentment among ratepayers reluctant to take on extra labour. In 1816, when the Epsom vestry considered how best to employ the unemployed agricultural workers, there was a

<sup>114</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English poor law History* 1: The old poor law (London, Frank Cass and Company, reprint 1963), p.192.

<sup>115</sup> SHC P20/2/1, 'Bletchingley December 1817'.

<sup>116</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p. 553A.

<sup>117</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 27, Replies Abinger, Albury, Bletchingley Buckland Chobham, Cobham, East Clandon, Egham, Ewhurst, Great Bookham, Guildford (united parishes of St Mary and Holy Trinity, Guildford (St Nicholas), Haslemere, Limpsfield, Lingfield Merrow, Merstham, Newdigate, Oxted, Send and Ripley, Wallington pp. 474b–86b.

suggestion that gentlemen and farmers should hire one or more of these men. Six men seem to have found jobs but others remained without work. A report in March 1817 stated that only sixteen out of thirty-three people had found work, and seventeen persons occupying land in the parish had “not signified any intention as to the employment of these parishioners.”<sup>118</sup> In October 1829 Dunsfold set up a committee to meet every month with the guardian of the parish to try to apportion the jobless labourers to owners and occupiers of land in the parish.<sup>119</sup> Some parishes considered renting land to provide paupers with work. In Dorking a special vestry met in October 1829 to consider how to employ the increasing numbers of unemployed agricultural labourers. One suggestion was for the select vestry to rent out portions of land near the town for the employment of the poor, while encouraging landowners to lease out land not exceeding twenty acres to the parish.<sup>120</sup> The parish of Godalming also rented twenty-five acres of land for the employment of the poor in December 1829.<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately, many parishes lost considerable sums of money establishing work schemes. In 1831 the Dorking paupers earned £300 after the parish had spent £1,157 on materials and equipment.<sup>122</sup>

As most parishes found it increasingly difficult to provide profitable work for labourers, they concentrated on merely extracting a quantity of labour in return for maintenance, mostly road mending and breaking stones. Of the replies from Surrey to the commissioners to Question 6 of the Rural Queries, 6% of parishes responded that they required unemployed labourers to perform work for the parish in order to obtain relief.<sup>123</sup> In times of work scarcity roadwork was vital for parish overseers trying to find employment. Copleston recognised the object of working on the roads “is not to make the labour profitable but useful.” At the same time he stressed that the labour must be controlled

<sup>118</sup> SHC 3132/2/4, ‘Epsom vestry minutes 15 April 1816 and 14 March 1817’.

<sup>119</sup> SHC DUN/8/1, ‘Dunfold rate book 9 October and 22 October 1829’.

<sup>120</sup> SHC DOM/9/3 Part 2, ‘Dorking vestry minutes 27 October 1829’.

<sup>121</sup> SHC 2253/11/1, ‘Godalming vestry minutes 16 December 1829’.

<sup>122</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 552A.

<sup>123</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 6 p.474a–88a.

and “scantily paid” to encourage labourers to find alternative work.<sup>124</sup> Inevitably, however, there was insufficient work to go round, especially in winter months when the rate of unemployment increased. The Cranleigh vestry complained that the roads provided the only general source of work for paupers, for the parish was unable to procure more profitable employment.<sup>125</sup> The Thames Ditton vestry grumbled that in winter months it was very difficult to find work for paupers for only gravel digging was available. At the same time, parishes were very concerned to keep men from the gravel pits wherever possible, and Betchingley’s vestry made an order that any pauper working for a farmer who leaves without being discharged “shall not be allowed to go into the gravel pits or any other work” without the direction of the overseer.<sup>126</sup> Reportedly, the men made little effort when working in the gravel or chalk pits, aware that however hard they worked they still obtained a great deal less than independent labourers.<sup>127</sup> The average wage in rural Surrey was 12s a week and the size of the allowance was set below the going wage. In Chertsey the overseer paid Charles Wood, a married man with four children, 11s for six days’ work and Daniel Newman, a single man, 5s for six days work.<sup>128</sup> The scale of pay to paupers working for the parish varied from parish to parish (see Table 4.16).

<sup>124</sup> E. Copleston, *A second letter to the Right Hon Robert Peel MP for the University of Oxford on the causes of the increase of pauperism and the poor laws* (London, John Murray, 1819), p.98.

<sup>125</sup> SHC P58/1/1, ‘Cranleigh November 1833’.

<sup>126</sup> SHC P20/2/1, ‘Betchingley vestry minutes February 1828’.

<sup>127</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 522.

<sup>128</sup> Abstract Returns sent to the Select Committee on Labourers’ Wages 1824, XIX pp.44-5, and Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 8 pp. 474a – 88a also SHC P2/3/11 Chertsey Relief Book April 1831–1833.

Table 4.16 *Scale of pay for parish work in four Surrey parishes for the years 1823 to 1831*

Date	Parish	Scale Of Pay For Parish Work
1823	Cranleigh	Single Labourer 5d per day Man And Wife 1s " Family With 1 child 1s 2d " Family With 2 children 1s 3d " Family 3 Children (And Upward) 1s 4d "
1826	Bletchingley	Paid Men 7d Every Load Of Stones They dug In Gravel Pits
1829	Bletchingley	Single Men 4s 6d Per 6 Day Week In Gravel Pits
1831	Chertsey	Single Man 5s Per 6 Day Week Married Man 4 children 11s " " "
1831	Shere	Single man 5s Per 6 Day week Man and wife 7s " " " Family 1 child 8s " " " Family 2 children 9s " " " For Work On The Roads And Digging Gravel

Source: SHC P58/1/1 Cranleigh Vestry minutes, P20/2/1 Bletchingley Vestry Minutes; P2/3/11 Chertsey Relief Book; SHER/8/1 Shere Resolution Book

Paupers often protested that they could not live on the wages paid for working on the road or at the gravel pits. Thomas Briggs and Isaac Pearman complained that 1s a load gravel digging was not enough, and the Thames Ditton vestry did agree to pay them 1s 2d per load instead.<sup>129</sup> In the parish of Shere in the winter of 1830 the problem of providing enough work was problematic, so the vestry resolved "that no single man or boys be put on the road except in particular circumstances", that family men would be given preference; and no pauper is to "apply for relief for weather or any other casual cause but in urgent cases such as long illness."<sup>130</sup>

<sup>129</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, 'Thames Ditton vestry 17 January 1833'.

<sup>130</sup> SHC SHER/8/1, 'Shere resolution book 1 February 1830'.



*Supervision of labour*

In the year 1832–1833 the figure returned for England as a whole was 51,705 employed on the road, of whom 2,104 came from Surrey.<sup>131</sup> Costs for providing work on the roads could be high, for example for the year 25<sup>th</sup> March 1831 to 24<sup>th</sup> March 1832 the parish of Albury spent £227 8s 2d on providing road work, which was 24.4 per cent of the total amount spent on poor relief for the year (£931 4s 2d).<sup>132</sup> It was seen as important to supervise the labour, to make sure the men completed a day's work, although it was difficult for unpaid overseers, however "desirous and zealous", to devote much of their time to superintend labour of this kind."<sup>133</sup> In Bletchingley William Hewett oversaw the gravel diggers who worked from six in the morning to six in the evening with half an hour for breakfast and one hour for dinner. Anyone who did not do the full stint lost a quarter of a day's pay.<sup>134</sup> At Dorking the rules laid down that "labourers employed by this parish ...begin their work daily at 6 o'clock in the morning and continue till 6 o'clock in the evening and that anyone failing to his duty in this respect be immediately discharged."<sup>135</sup> It is apparent that the vestry closely administered the work given to the able-bodied. An entry recorded at a meeting of the vestry on 28 November 1831 states that "Richard Mott and James Cook, lately employed to dig stones in the Homewood, had given in a false account of their earnings, resolved that they be immediately discharged from their said work."<sup>136</sup> The inventory of tools belonging to the parish of Great Bookham for employment of the poor clearly illustrates the nature of the work: "4 wheelbarrows, three pickaxes, two mattocks, two spades, two shovels, two stone hammers, two baskets for stone picking and three large wedges".<sup>137</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Abstract Returns Poor Rate Returns year ending 25<sup>th</sup> March 1832 XXI p.193–4.

<sup>132</sup> SHC 3624/3/21, 'Albury vestry minutes 26 March 1831–25 March 1832'.

<sup>133</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, 'Thames Ditton vestry minutes 17 January 1833'.

<sup>134</sup> SHC P20/2/1, 'Bletchingley vestry minutes January 1817'.

<sup>135</sup> SHC 1867/box5/1, 'Dorking signed minute book 1831–1867 30 March 1832'.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, '28 November 1831'.

<sup>137</sup> SHC 3551/2/3, 'Great Bookham vestry accounts March 1822'.

*The labour rate*

The labour rate variant of the roundsman system came into operation in Surrey after 1815. By the mid-1820s this was a popular method for dealing with seasonal unemployment, as it promoted hope that it would restore the incentives of wage differentials. Eastwood believes the operation of the labour rate demonstrates a certain political vitality of the parish system, “in attempting to combine social policy, fiscal regulation, and effective allocation of labour” it showed the vestry system at its most ambitious.<sup>138</sup> Under the labour rate, the total wage bill for the employment of unemployed labourers was divided among all ratepayers of the parish, and their contribution was according to their poor rate assessment. Now, labourers received wages from employers rather than relief from the parish and it was possible for employers to pay valued labourers more than the flat rate set down by the overseers. There was opposition to the labour rate from some quarters. Labour-hiring farmers were more heavily subsidized than small tradesmen who had no need for hired labour but of course had to support a portion of the parish’s workforce. Although ratepayers did complain, many parishes accepted the scheme as a short-term solution to increasing unemployment, especially in winter months.

From some parish records it is possible to collect information on these schemes and of course other parishes may have operated similar schemes. The evidence indicates that some parishes operated the scheme over a period of time and others just for a short time, as shown (see Table 4.17).

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<sup>138</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994), p.156.

Table 4.17 *Operation of the labour rate in five Surrey parishes*

Date	Parish	Details Of The Labour Rate
1816–1823	Shere	To Operate In The Months October To April Assessment: Property And Land Of Rentable Value: £50 And Under £100 Employ 1 Man For 2 Weeks £100 And Under £150 “ 1 Man For 3 Weeks £150 And Under £200 “ 1 Man For 4 Weeks (And So On Every £50)
1821–1822	St Nicholas Guildford	Those Property And Land Rated For Every £24 Employ One Labourer Boys To Be Employed At A Ratio Of 2 Per 1 Labourer (November 1822 56 Men And 26 Boys Employed)
1822	Woking	Committee Of 11 Members To Whom Paupers Apply For Work: Rate For Work set Single Man 3s Per Week Man And Wife 5s “ Family 1 Child 6s “ Family 2 Children 6s “ Family 3 Children 7s “ Family 4 Children 8s “
1826–1830	Woking	To Operate Months October To April Committee of 11 members To Whom Paupers Apply For Work: Rate For Work Set Single man 5s Per Week Man And Wife 7s “ Family 1 Child 8s “ Family 2 Children 9s “ Family 3 Children 10s “ November – December 49 Men And Boys Found Work On The Road Digging, Breaking Stones And Trenching (Committee Instructed To Impose Fines On Non-attendance At Committee Meetings: 1s Parish Officers And 6d Others)
1828	Godalming	December Special Vestry To Use 25 Acres Of Land To Employ The Poor In Winter Months
1829	Dunsfold	October Owners Or Occupiers Of Land To Take Proportion Of Unemployed Labourers According To The Assessment Of The Rating Book

Source: SHC P10/1/18 Shere vestry July 1816 employment scheme, GUN/8/2 St Nicholas vestry Minutes 1 November 1822 SHC; P52/3/45 Woking Vestry Minutes 26 September 1822 18 October 1826; DUN/8/1 Dunsfold Rate Book 22 October 1829; 2253/11/1 Godalming Vestry Minutes 16<sup>th</sup> December 1829, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1831; Shere Vestry July 1816 employment scheme; GUN/8/2 St Nicholas Vestry Minutes 1<sup>st</sup> November 1822; P52/3/45 Woking Vestry Minutes 26<sup>th</sup> September 1822 and 18<sup>th</sup> October 1826; DUN/8/1 Dunsfold Rate Book 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1829; 2253/11/1 Godalming Vestry Minutes 16<sup>th</sup> December 1829, and 2253/11/1 4<sup>th</sup> December 1831.

After the Swing Riots of 1830 the authorities viewed as crucial the need to provide employment for paupers, and the instigation of labour schemes under legislation will be discussed later.<sup>139</sup>

### *Children and the parish*

Overseers were responsible for the pauper children in the parish, and they aimed to help them achieve self-sufficiency in order to prevent them from becoming pauperised for life. The Act of 1601 had stipulated that children had to be set to work so that they could contribute to their own maintenance if their parents could not keep them. It also stated that they were to follow an apprenticeship when old enough, thereby teaching them a useful trade or craft. By the early nineteenth century it was common for Surrey children whose parents were sick, widowed, unemployed or otherwise pauperised, to receive their keep as child allowances included in the family pension already discussed.

Parishes also tried to reduce these allowances by finding work for older children. In many rural villages dependent on agriculture the overseers had no option, and very few opportunities, for the employment of poor girls and boys. The normal economic role of children was helping their parents in their employment; village craftsmen might take apprentices from time to time but the static market severely restricted their capacity to do so.<sup>140</sup> Many contemporaries saw it as important to train up children to be industrious workers. Townsend suggested that each parish should set up workshops where children could be employed.<sup>141</sup> The evidence indicates that few parishes created work placements for parish children and that these schemes were exceptional and mostly short-lived. In 1816 Thames Ditton's vestry agreed to employ children of those on weekly relief and capable of work under the direction of Mrs Ann Aubin, the governess of the poor house.

<sup>139</sup> See Chapter Nine.

<sup>140</sup> Wells, 'Migration the law', 115.

<sup>141</sup> J.A. Townsend, *A Dissertation on the poor laws* (London, C. Dilly in the Poultry, 1781), p.88.

Boys over thirteen years of age were to work on the common and girls over ten years old had to spin in the poor house, under threat of the withdrawal of their parish allowance if they refused.<sup>142</sup> In 1819 the parish of Egham also considered the employment of parish children. The assistant overseer, Mr Duck, prepared a statement of the expense of employing 100 children or more at a house of industry. The work on offer included spinning and weaving, as well as carpentry and brickwork, glazing and painting. The children were to receive instruction in spinning and weaving, and parents who refused to send their children were to lose their weekly allowances.<sup>143</sup>

Setting children to work was a far greater problem than just providing maintenance. Even before the end of the Napoleonic Wars parishes “faced ever deepening crisis with employment of adolescents.”<sup>144</sup> As envisaged in the 1601 Act, the principal means of teaching skills to pauper children was apprenticeship, and some parishes did try to find places for them. In 1817 the Bletchingley vestry agreed that all children chargeable to the parish above the age of 10 years and under 15 years were to be “apprenticed out” to “the occupiers of land and tenements according to the rate of their different holdings.”<sup>145</sup> Unfortunately, the matter dragged on without resolution; in March 1820 fifteen boys between the ages 10–17 years and ten girls between the ages 8–17 years remained in the workhouse. Now a matter of urgency, the vestry resolved to pay £6 to every inhabitant who would take a boy and £3 for a girl. Sick children were to be returned to the poor house until they had recovered and in the meantime the inhabitant took on another child. The parish provided clothing for the children, and parishioners who refused to take a child were liable to a fine to be decided by the magistrates.<sup>146</sup> Some parishes adopted a policy of sending parish children out of the parish to be cared for. In 1830 Little Bookham agreed that the two daughters of William and Ann Harris, chargeable paupers of the parish,

<sup>142</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, ‘Thames Ditton vestry minutes July 1816’.

<sup>143</sup> SHC 2516/5/4, ‘Egham vestry minutes 4 January 1819 and 2 May 1819’.

<sup>144</sup> Wells, ‘Migration the law’, 115.

<sup>145</sup> SHC P20/6/7, ‘Bletchingley vestry accounts December 1817’.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 March 1820.

should stay with Mrs Elizabeth Westwood in Morden for £2 for six months and the parish agreed to clothe them before sending them away.<sup>147</sup> By 1833 the Assistant Commissioners found little evidence of this practice in Surrey, and Maclean reported that Surrey's parish officers, unlike many of their contemporaries in other counties, were reluctant to apprentice pauper children without their parents' consent.<sup>148</sup> When William Hunt applied to the vestry at Egham in December 1824 for relief, he pointed out that his wages of 12s a week were insufficient to keep his wife and six children. Relief was therefore made dependent on allowing his daughter Sarah to be put out as apprentice to the silk mills in Blackheath. He refused to do so. Denied relief in March 1825 because he still had not allowed his daughter to become an apprentice, he threatened to "run away and leave his family on the parish". On this occasion, he received 2s 6d sacrament money.<sup>149</sup> It is possible to identify from parish accounts some parishes that did provide apprenticeships to pauper children with no close living relatives. Thames Ditton apprenticed fourteen-year-old Robert Rawlings, who had no parents, to William Sims, a Hackney chimney sweep, for seven years at the cost of £4.<sup>150</sup> The parish also apprenticed eight year old James Warner, an illegitimate child chargeable to the parish, whose father was dead and mother "not heard of for some time", to John Rowles, a chimney sweep of Kingston upon Thames.<sup>151</sup>

Some parishes were also willing to contribute part of the cost for apprenticeship. The parish vestry of Haslemere in 1818 apprenticed George Marshal to Samuel Young, a Weybridge blacksmith, for seven years at the cost of £20, of which his father contributed £5. In Surrey some children were apprenticed annually and their fees paid for by local charities. Egham paid for about eight yearly apprentices to various tradesmen, the money coming from a local charity. In the parish of Godalming a charity paid for apprenticing two

<sup>147</sup> SHC BKLT/8/1(1), 'Little Bookham vestry accounts April 1830'.

<sup>148</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p. 560A.

<sup>149</sup> SHC ACC 1498/1 Egham Vestry Minutes Book 25<sup>th</sup> December 1824 and 6<sup>th</sup> March 1825.

<sup>150</sup> SHC 2568/10/25, 'Thames Ditton vestry minutes 22 December 1832'.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 October 1833.

or three children annually.<sup>152</sup> Parishes also spent considerable sums clothing and shoeing poor children going into apprenticeship or service. The Great Bookham vestry, for instance, paid 17s 6d for clothes for Worsfold's girl to go into service.<sup>153</sup> Wells has viewed this provision of clothing as "bribery" to encourage potential employers to take children.<sup>154</sup>

There are very few references to the education of the outdoor poor in vestry accounts the only provision of formal education was sometimes provided to children of the workhouse (see Chapter Five). Problems often arose when the parish found itself forced to stand in for those who had defaulted on their obligations to support their own children. This situation usually arose in connection with illegitimacy or when the breadwinner deserted his wife and family. Overseers were involved in trying to resolve these cases and the parish tried to minimise the expense by issuing the relevant papers, warrants for arrest, affiliation orders and bonds for the maintenance of children. In the collection of the Kirby Lonsdale Township letters there are examples of letters requesting relief for children in need due to illness, unemployment or accident. The letters "are an imperfect guide to family feeling but tell us something of how children were regarded".<sup>155</sup>

### *Housing and the poor*

Housing was a basic need, and payment of housing rent was usually an annual or twice yearly outlay, which could vary from about £2 to £7 per annum. In Surrey paupers found it impossible to pay. Some parishes provided housing for poor parishioners, though charitable bequests occasionally included it in their provisions. The parish of Thames

<sup>152</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p.529A.

<sup>153</sup> SHC 3551/2/4, 'Great Bookham vestry minutes March 1827'.

<sup>154</sup> Wells, 'Migration the law', 115.

<sup>155</sup> J.S. Taylor, 'Voices in the crowd: The Kirby Lonsdale Township letters, 1809-1834', in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty the voices and strategies of the English poor 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan), p.121.

Ditton had in its possession a workhouse for forty persons, and fifteen rented cottages, housing in total eighty-two persons “inhabited by families at the cost of £104, several of which families receive pecuniary relief.”<sup>156</sup> In 1822, as a result of a significant rise in expenditure on rents for the paupers in Cobham, the vestry accepted a loan from Harvey Combe Esq., a large local landowner, to build twelve cottages. In April 1833 it decided to rent them out at 1s 6d per week for single tenements or 2s 6d a week for double tenements.<sup>157</sup> To house large families, sometimes parishes moved paupers out of their present accommodation. For example in 1821 the Cranleigh parish officers forcibly evicted Charles Potterton and his wife from a parish cottage and placed them in an almshouse in order to make way for Thomas Luff, his wife and five children.<sup>158</sup>

Individual parish vestries decided on their policy regarding payment of rents, although many overseers saw rent relief as the first step towards permanent pauperism and opposed it. The select vestry of Dorking in 1821 decided that, in the light of increasing debt upon the parish, “no relief should be granted to the poor of this parish in the shape of rent.”<sup>159</sup> The parish of Thames Ditton also tried to reduce the rent burden, and in April 1822 the vestry instructed the overseers to visit the houses where the rents were being paid to “ascertain whether there is a possibility of accommodating more persons in each dwelling to reduce the rent burden to the parish.”<sup>160</sup> In 1833, from the Replies to the Commissioners, only half the parishes that made returns stated that poor families had rent assistance. Replies from the parishes of Chertsey, Great Bookham, Buckland, and Oxted reported that rents were not paid and the parish of Egham declared that rates were only paid by sanction of the magistrates.<sup>161</sup> The parish of Albury explained that it would pay

<sup>156</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, ‘Thames Ditton vestry minutes 23 June 1834’.

<sup>157</sup> SHC Box 6/1865/30, ‘Cobham vestry 27 September 1822 and 8 April 1833’.

<sup>158</sup> SHC P58/1/1, ‘Cranleigh vestry accounts 15 October 1821’.

<sup>159</sup> SHC DOM/9/3 part 1, ‘Dorking vestry 26 March 1821’.

<sup>160</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, ‘Thames Ditton vestry minutes 7 April 1822’.

<sup>161</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 21, Reply Egham p. 479b.



the rent, “where it is cheaper to do so than take the family into the poor house.”<sup>162</sup> The parish of East Clandon replied that rents of out-parishioners were often paid to “avoid the necessity of such families coming home”, which could result in higher relief costs for the parish, and Bletchingley answered that rents were “partly or wholly paid for men with large families.”<sup>163</sup> Maclean noted that where the rents were not paid the poor “are in a poorer or more distressed condition since the practice has been discontinued.”<sup>164</sup> Some parishes did not wish to admit to the policy of paying rents; the return for Epsom stated it was not the practice of the parish to pay rents, but Maclean reported that £50 a year was being paid and the “chief applicants are those who have large families or persons of idle and dissolute character.”<sup>165</sup> Parish vestries also decided on their policy regarding payment of rates. It was usual practice for parishes to exempt cottages from the rating, an issue clearly discernible in the replies to the Commissioners as the majority of parishes stated that poor families were exempt from the rates.

### *Medical Relief*

Sickness has always been a cause of poverty as it prevents breadwinners from earning their families’ keep. From an economic point of view, sickness was never a problem for the wealthy, but for the poor “sickness immediately created economic problems of immense and often insuperable magnitude.”<sup>166</sup> Before 1834 there was no explicit legal requirement for the parish overseers to provide medical relief, but by the eighteenth century most parishes were doing so. Thomas notes that “organising medical treatment

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<sup>162</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 21, Reply Albury p. 475b .

<sup>163</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 21, East Clandon p.475b and Bletchingley p.475b.

<sup>164</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p.537A.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> M.W. Flinn, ‘Medical services under the new poor law’, in D. Fraser (ed), *The new poor law in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1976), p. 45.

became an essential part of the overseers duties.”<sup>167</sup> As “sickness relief swallowed up a very sizeable chunk of poor law resources in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries”<sup>168</sup> the parishes responsible for supporting the sick and their families often viewed any additional expenditure for medical relief as cost effective because “the sooner they could be cured and restored to independence the better.”<sup>169</sup> Parishes also gave medical relief to the aged and chronic sick who were incapable of work. The overseers, on occasion, also relied on medical opinion when granting relief. Mr Martin, surgeon for the Oxted parish, wrote to the overseers in 1824 verifying “Robert Russell in bad health and unable to work.”<sup>170</sup> He was also prepared to support paupers’ claims for relief. In 1826 Martin wrote to the parish concerning one man named Bachelor who had chronic dysentery and, in his opinion, required “half a pound of mutton daily” and only be given “light work” if he was to recover.<sup>171</sup>

In rural parishes the doctors’ salaries ranged from £10– £40 per annum and in town parishes from £42–£84, depending on the size of the parish and the requirements of the contract.<sup>172</sup> Mr Thompson, who had cared for the sick in Oxted for many years, had never entered into a written agreement with the parish until 1832. He considered “the parishioners of Oxted and myself have hitherto been on such good terms that we never had any but a verbal agreement.”<sup>173</sup> The parish was anxious to set a fee at twenty guineas for medical and surgical attendance, excluding midwifery and inoculation. He agreed reluctantly, but pointed out the depressed state of agriculture meant “the very depression is the cause of increasing the number of paupers and thereby adding to my

<sup>167</sup> E.G Thomas, ‘The old poor law and medicine’, *Medical History*, 24 (1980) 1.

<sup>168</sup> S. King, ‘Regional patterns in the experiences and treatment of the sick poor, 1800 –40: rights, obligations and duties in the rhetoric of paupers’, *Family Community History*, 10 (2007) 63.

<sup>169</sup> G. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales 1601–1834* ( Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1974),p.65.

<sup>170</sup> SHC P3/5/38/16, ‘Letter from Martin to the overseers Oxted 5 February 1824’.

<sup>171</sup> SHC P3/5/38/78, ‘Letter from Martin to the Overseers Oxted 3 May 1826’.

<sup>172</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 536A.

<sup>173</sup> SHC P3/5/40/1, ‘Letter from Mr Thompson to the parish 19 April 1832’.

duties as medical attendant.”<sup>174</sup> In parishes where it was possible to call on more than one doctor the vestry could maintain some degree of competitive price control by fixed price contracts that ran for a year or less, often followed by the appointment of a different doctor. Williams has identified local medical practitioners employed by rotation in Bedfordshire, a practice that occurred in Surrey. In Dorking, for instance, three different doctors served the parish in the space of seven years (1815–1822), the parish paying them £36 15s for a six-month period.<sup>175</sup>

During the late eighteenth century it was normal for parishes to engage doctors on comprehensive contracts. Parishes increasingly used this system when they found their finances under pressure and were forced to reduce expenditure. As Williams has shown, this was common in Bedfordshire because of high levels of poor law expenditure.<sup>176</sup> In Berkshire, Essex and Oxfordshire a great proportion of contracts date from the late eighteenth century.<sup>177</sup> This is also the case for Surrey parishes. Williams has also shown in Bedfordshire that many practitioners inserted exemptions into agreements which reduced their costs.<sup>178</sup> Some Surrey parishes also adopted this practice. It was common to exclude certain expensive items from the contract and the most common exclusions were smallpox, midwifery and broken bones. The parish of Byfleet appointed the surgeon Mr Charles Brown, to provide the poor with “surgical attendance” for the annual salary of £10 10s, excluding the treatment of smallpox, venereal disease and pregnancy.<sup>179</sup> There’s vestry did include these items but produced an itemised list of acceptable charges for Davy to attend the sick and provide medicines for the poor, which included carrying out vaccinations at the cost of £25 a year. Davy received fixed prices of 10s 6d per case for

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>175</sup> S. Williams, ‘Poor relief welfare and medical provision in Bedfordshire. The social economic and demographic context c1770–1834’ (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge 1999), p.181, and SHC DOM/9/3/ Part 1, ‘Dorking vestry minutes November 1815–March 1822’.

<sup>176</sup> Williams, ‘Poor relief welfare’, and S. Williams, ‘Practitioners’ income and provision for the poor’ *Social History of Medicine*, 18 (2005) 161–64.

<sup>177</sup> Thomas, ‘The old poor law’, 7–8.

<sup>178</sup> Williams, ‘Poor relief welfare’, 177.

<sup>179</sup> SHC BY/8/1, ‘Byfleet vestry accounts memorandum June 1820’.

midwifery; £5 5s per case of compound fracture, including medicines, and £2 2s and, £1 1s for fractures of the arms and ribs respectively.<sup>180</sup> Whereas the parish of Betchworth appointed Mr Steele as surgeon in 1827 on a salary of £40 per annum, his care was to include “every illness, incident to mankind and the labours of women included.”<sup>181</sup>

### *Cheap medical care*

The correspondence with doctors clearly demonstrates that parish overseers primarily wanted cheap medical care for parish paupers. The overseers of Bletchingley wrote to Mr J. Bird, a surgeon in Croydon, who was caring for James Terry, to point out that “the poor of this parish are very numerous and expenses yearly very heavy” and consequently they required his assistance “to be done in the most economical manner possible, bearing in mind your professional aid is called in for a pauper.”<sup>182</sup> It is also evident that the continually increasing fees of doctors represented part of the burden parish overseers had to bear in a time of increasing costs. Parishes were therefore anxious to keep medical costs to a minimum, and in some parishes doctors were prepared to tender for the work.<sup>183</sup> Even so, when the Egham vestry placed the medical attendance for the parish out to tender (a regular practice for suppliers of the poor house) Mr Gilbertson, the surgeon, who had served the parish of Egham in 1823, took exception to this. He wrote to the overseers, pointing out:

“ I believe it is not very usual to resort to the system of tenders and contracting annually with medical persons, the objections are obvious, and the more so in large, extensive and populous parish, such as Egham, which is of no trifling magnitude. Accepting the proposals of

<sup>180</sup> SHC SHER/8/1, ‘Shere resolution book 8 July 1830’.

<sup>181</sup> SHC P22/5/73, ‘Betchworth Vestry minutes 18<sup>th</sup> April 1827’.

<sup>182</sup> SHC P20/2/3 Bletchingley Vestry accounts 8 April 1827 letter to Mr J Bird Surgeon Croydon.

<sup>183</sup> A. Digby, *Making a medical living: Doctors and patients in the English market for medicine 1720–1911* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p.225.

strangers or of such individuals as may offer medical attendance at a charge no reasonable person can expect a respectable practitioner to give it out, would be highly discreditable and severe upon those who either from old, age, infirmity or sickness may require medical attendance.”<sup>184</sup>

Egham did not reappoint Mr Gilbertson, engaging Mr Holmes as parish doctor for the year 1824–1825.<sup>185</sup> Doctors were not always satisfied with their salary. Mr Freemantle, a surgeon, wrote to the Woking vestry, complaining that his salary of £45 a year was insufficient because the number of paupers had increased. He pointed out that “many who applied to me two years back for advice with the money in their hands, now are obliged to come with an order...the parish being so large and the number of poor is great it costs me a very considerable sum for medicines.”<sup>186</sup> At the same time, the poor were often quick to grumble when dissatisfied with their treatment. For example, in Caterham some of Mr Parson’s poor patients claimed that he had not earned his fee of £12 12s to attend the poor and, as a result, his contract was not renewed. Mr Bottomley of Croydon was appointed and received the same salary £12 12s, plus an additional £1 10s for attending every case of midwifery when required. He was contracted to attend the poor and provide medicines with the proviso “that any extreme cases should be taken into consideration by the vestry at the end of the year and fair compensation made.”<sup>187</sup> These parochial medical agreements with doctors normally included the supply of medicines but it was usual practice for overseers to prescribe independently to the sick, wine, port, gin or brandy along with beer or an extra meat provision.

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<sup>184</sup> SHC 2516/5/4, ‘Egham Vestry 7 March 1824’.

<sup>185</sup> SHC 2516/5/4, ‘Egham vestry 7 March 1824’.

Mr Gilbertson refused a salary of £75 per annum and Mr Holmes appointed for £75 per annum

<sup>186</sup> SHC P52/12/75, ‘Woking letters 1 April 1823 W. Freemantle’.

<sup>187</sup> SHC LA2/2/21, ‘Caterham vestry accounts 3 March 1828 and 5 May 1828’.

From vestry accounts it can be seen in Surrey, as in other counties, parishes tried to deal with illness locally, as this was the cheapest option, but when they could not provide treatment for the poor in their own home or the poor house they often reluctantly sent them to hospital.<sup>188</sup> In 1834 the parish of Chessington paid Guy's Hospital £3 15s for the care of Thomas Wessell.<sup>189</sup> Another common alternative was to send the patient to the seaside to obtain the benefits of salt-water bathing.<sup>190</sup> In a letter to the Shere overseers, a doctor in Reigate recommended that James Tickner, an out-parishioner of Shere, should be sent to Margate to the sea-bathing infirmary, as this was "the only chance he has of getting better." As this course of action was expensive, the overseers were encouraged to pay for the treatment by being advised that without assistance he would be sent back to Shere to "become a permanent burden to the parish for the remainder of his life."<sup>191</sup>

### *Informal practitioners*

The parish was also able to call upon "informal practitioners" to provide medical assistance.<sup>192</sup> These included midwives, bonesetters, specialist nurses and suppliers of drugs. The numbers of paid midwives increased, and they played an important role tending to pregnant pauper women, unmarried mothers and those not reliant on the parish for relief but who could not afford the services of a doctor during childbirth. The average fee to a midwife in rural Surrey was around 5s, a similar sum to that paid in many other counties, including Bedfordshire.<sup>193</sup> The assumption was that doctors would only attend difficult cases of childbirth. In Surrey, as in other counties, parishes frequently employed nurses to care for the sick.<sup>194</sup> Their role was often that of "sitters," nurses who attended extremely ill patients and sometimes were employed by the parish to care for the dying.

<sup>188</sup> A. Stringer, 'Depth and diversity in parochial healthcare' in *Family and Community History*, 9 (2006) 50–51.

<sup>189</sup> SHC 3830/4/2, 'Chessington vestry minutes 20 October 1834'.

<sup>190</sup> Stringer, 'Depth and diversity', 51.

<sup>191</sup> SHC 1956/1/11, 'Shere letters 27 September 1821'.

<sup>192</sup> Stringer, 'Depth and diversity', 50.

<sup>193</sup> Williams, 'Poor relief welfare', 177.

<sup>194</sup> Stringer, 'Depth and diversity', 50.

They often received beer, food and a 6d fee for a night's watch. When the elderly John Otoway of West Clandon was taken ill, the parish paid for attendance, gin and candles at a cost of 2s 3d.<sup>195</sup> Parishes often employed poor relief recipients as nurses and many were widows but it "unlikely these women could make a regular living from the role."<sup>196</sup>

### *The mentally ill*

The parish also had to deal with the mentally ill. The Elizabethan poor laws had made no separate provision for this type of pauper, an omission that an act of 1714 amended by making a distinction between pauper lunatics and "rogues and vagabonds."<sup>197</sup> Parishes expected relatives to care for the insane or, failing this, they might ask unqualified people to deal with them, their wages being paid by the parish overseer. The Asylum Act of 1828 empowered justices at the Quarter Sessions to construct lunatic asylums but, as the measure was permissive, progress was slow.<sup>198</sup> In fact, Surrey opened its first county asylum at Springfield in Wandsworth in 1841 and a second at Brookwood in 1867. The 1835 enquiry into the state and expense of pauper lunatics in Surrey revealed a minimum of 332 people classified as insane (118 males and 214 females) with no replies from fourteen parishes. Of these, 103 were returned as dangerous lunatics, 133 as lunatics, 9 as dangerous idiots and 87 as non-dangerous idiots. Of the total number, 192 were confined to licensed lunatic asylums, 108 in workhouses (11 of these cases returned as dangerous) and 32 with friends or family. The estimated cost for those confined in licensed asylums was 10s per person each week, and the remainder in the workhouses at 4s 6d per week.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>195</sup> SHC CL/W/16/1, 'West Clandon 8 January 1815 vestry minutes'.

<sup>196</sup> Stringer, 'Depth and diversity', 50.

<sup>197</sup> 12 Anne c.23

<sup>198</sup> 9 Geo IV cap 40, 1828 Act, To Amend the Laws for the Erection and Regulation of County Lunatic Asylums

<sup>199</sup> SHC P34/Box 2, 'Chobham 30 June 1835'.

This clearly shows, parishes were reluctant to take advantage of the services of lunatic asylums, as the high cost of sending patients to the asylums discouraged overseers from dispatching any but the most serious cases. When Chobham enquired about the cost of sending a parishioner to Hoxton House in Shoreditch, a private home for mental derangement, it learned that the charge was 9s 9d per week and took no further action.<sup>200</sup> Thomas has shown that “contracting out became the accepted policy for “acutely disturbed” cases only.<sup>201</sup> In 1816 the Mickleham vestry received a report that the officers were finding it impossible to manage a number of old men in the poor house because of their “uncleanliness and disorderly conduct”. The vestry therefore agreed to send them to an asylum.<sup>202</sup> There are other examples of the mentally sick, who had become a burden on the parish, being sent to private lunatic asylums such as the Bethlehem Hospital and Hoxton House in London, but the numbers sent from Surrey were small. The vestry of Thames Ditton conveyed William Hitchcock, a ‘maniac’, to an asylum in Peckham in December 1827 at the cost of 10s 6d. per week for his care.<sup>203</sup> In 1827 the overseers of the parish of Chaldon paid Hoxton House £7 17s 6d for ten weeks’ care of John Borer, together with medicines and the services of a porter during his illness and funeral.<sup>204</sup>

### *Outbreak of disease*

Another problem which involved the overseers was outbreaks of large-scale sickness. By 1831 cholera had spread to the south of England and is often mentioned in parish records. The government set up in London a temporary Board of Health in June 1831, which in October advised the establishment of local boards to stop the spread. They were established in Oxford, Henley, Reading, Hungerford, Chelmsford and Barking as well as in

<sup>200</sup> SHC P34/14/1, ‘Return for Surrey copy Chobham May 28 1835 ‘.

<sup>201</sup> Thomas, ‘The old poor law ‘, 6.

<sup>202</sup> SHC MIC/9/1 Mickleham Vestry Minutes 27<sup>th</sup> September 1816.

<sup>203</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, ‘Thames Ditton vestry minutes 23 December 1827’.

<sup>204</sup> SHC P28/4/626, ‘Chaldon Parish’.



some large Surrey parishes.<sup>205</sup> In 1831 Egham hoped to stop the spread of cholera by creating a board, comprising clergymen, medical practitioners, churchwardens, the overseer of the poor and eight ratepayers. The board asked ratepayers to subscribe to a scheme to provide clothing, bedding, food and firing for the poorest parishioners. In addition, it ordered the removal of rubbish from the country lanes and the draining of stagnant pools.<sup>206</sup> This procedure was also followed in Hungerford.<sup>207</sup> Epsom established a board of health in August 1832 and submitted a plan to the vestry to whitewash the cottages of the poor and to provide medical attendance and medicines for them at a cost of £50.<sup>208</sup>

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the adoption of Jennerian vaccination “probably played a significant part in reducing smallpox deaths.”<sup>209</sup> In some parishes the overseers arranged the vaccination of poor families. In May 1831 the parish of Tandridge paid Mr Alan £9 3s to vaccinate fifty-nine children, but of course not everyone in the parish was vaccinated, and overseers also had to deal with sporadic outbreaks of smallpox.<sup>210</sup> In 1832 the outbreak of smallpox was a significant problem in rural Surrey. As isolation was recognised as a preventive measure, many parishes provided pest houses or adapted buildings to receive the sick. The Ewell vestry ordered in 1832 the churchwardens and overseers to provide a house to receive any patients of a “contagious nature.”<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Thomas, ‘The old poor law’, 15.

<sup>206</sup> SHC 2516/6/3, ‘Egham Board of Health 24 November 1831’.

<sup>207</sup> Thomas, “The old poor law”, 15.

<sup>208</sup> 3296/3/1 Epsom Vestry Minutes 24<sup>th</sup> August 1832 SHC

<sup>209</sup> Thomas, “The old poor law”, 12.

<sup>210</sup> SHC P24/1/18, ‘Tandridge overseers accounts May 1831’.

<sup>211</sup> SHC 3831/1/2, ‘Ewell vestry minutes 14 August 1832’ a practice followed in Chelmsford in Thomas, “The old poor Law” p. 77

*Vagrants and casual paupers*

The Elizabethan poor laws made the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor.<sup>212</sup> Parish authorities discriminated against the wilfully, idle and saw rogues and vagabonds as a threat to the “stability of a social order which was anchored in notions of private property.”<sup>213</sup> After the French Wars, demobilization and depression saw an increase in the number of casual paupers passing through, so one of the greatest concerns for an overseer was the removal of casual paupers and vagrants from the parish.

Ratepayers, of course, were also concerned that distribution of relief went only to genuinely impotent inhabitants of the parish.<sup>214</sup> Thames Ditton, which lay on the main road from London to Portsmouth, was particularly troubled, finding that the support and removal of travellers “greatly enhanced their poor rates.”<sup>215</sup> Maclean noted that it is “those parishes through which any of the great lines of road run, that trouble and expense arises.”<sup>216</sup> This is confirmed by more frequent entries relating to travellers in surviving parish minute books where main roads ran through or near to the parish boundary. The large rural parish of Farnham kept a log for the year 1824–1825 of all the casual paupers passing through the parish, and in total 1,344 people are recorded (see Appendix 1). These migrants included a high proportion of unemployed in search of work, and parish authorities viewed them as troublesome, expensive and unwanted outsiders. Casual paupers or vagrants could prove an expensive problem for a parish if they were taken ill, met with an accident or if pregnant went into labour, for their care added to parish costs.

<sup>212</sup> 39 Elizabeth c.3 (1598) and 43 Elizabeth c.2 (1601).

<sup>213</sup> S. Hindle, ‘Civility, honesty and the identification of the deserving poor in seventeenth-century England’, in H. French and J. Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 38.

<sup>214</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p.82.

<sup>215</sup> SHC 2568/10/26/23 Thames Ditton Case Settlement of paupers October 1833.

<sup>216</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 568A.

For the year 1824–25 the Farnham vestry paid out £21 1s 8d on passing paupers and in 1830–1831 £32 10s 1d.”<sup>217</sup> The overseers were anxious for them to leave the parish as quickly as possible to avoid any further costs. In 1819 the parish of Egham complained “of the unpleasant annoyance by beggars infesting the parish” and so appointed two special constables to clear the parish. Two further persons furnished with staffs, great coats and hats assisted them.<sup>218</sup> Thames Ditton appointed Henry Barnes and William Warwick in 1835 as “beggar drivers” to keep the beggars from the bounds of the parish and were to be paid 1s a week each “if they carried out the work effectually.”<sup>219</sup> The parish of Esher agreed to employ a person “with a staff coat and hat band” to move the beggars out of the parish, after several parishioners had complained to the vestry that the parish “is much infested with vagrants begging in the streets”.<sup>220</sup> Maclean reported that the parish officers in Guildford had reduced the cost of dealing with trampers by providing two sleeping rooms, one each for male and female vagrants, and given bread “instead of receiving ...a four penny ticket”. The vagrants were locked in at nine in the evening and released at daybreak.<sup>221</sup> Some parishes tried to discourage beggars from entering their parishes; the overseers in Frimley and Esher placed notices on roads at the entrances of their parishes, warning all beggars and vagrants that they would be apprehended and prosecuted if found begging or wandering in the parish.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> SHC 1565/Box 29, ‘Farnham vestry minutes 1824’ and 1565/Box 11, ‘Farnham vestry minutes 30 March 1830–22<sup>nd</sup> March 1831- total relief payments for the year £571 14s 3 ½ d’.

<sup>218</sup> SHC 2516/5/4, ‘Egham vestry minutes 2 May 1819’.

<sup>219</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, ‘Thames Ditton vestry minutes 6 February 1835’.

<sup>220</sup> SHC 238/ES/9/3, ‘Esher vestry minutes 1 May 1828’.

<sup>221</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 568A.

<sup>222</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, ‘Frimley vestry minutes 9 July 1822 and 238/ES/9/3 Esher vestry minutes April 1828’.

*Conclusion*

This chapter has examined how parish officials administered parish relief in all its forms to those outside the workhouse. Parishes used a variety of expedients at different times and in different places to try to alleviate the suffering of the out-parishioners and to care for their own parishioners. Where records have survived, it has been possible to gain an insight into the dimensions of rural poverty in Surrey. They also reveal the complexities of the poor relief system. The decentralised nature of the old poor law meant that in Surrey there were a large number of local initiatives and immense geographical variation in the methods of relief instigated by the various parishes to provide for those outside the workhouse. At the same time, parish officials were always aware that ratepayers demanded poor relief costs were kept to a minimum. During the period 1815–1834 it is possible to see a crisis centred on the poverty of the adult rural labourer increasingly dependent on wages paid for work. At a time of reduced employment opportunities, a decline in alternative sources of income meant parishes had to respond by providing for the increasing numbers of able-bodied adult labourers. What has been shown in rural Surrey, as parish authorities came under increasing pressure to provide relief there, was a crisis of paternalism.

## Chapter Five

### The Provision For Indoor Relief

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To gain a comprehensive view of poverty and welfare one has to understand the role of the workhouse within a broadly based system of poor relief that was administered at a parish level. The granting of outdoor relief in whatever form was only part of the picture.<sup>1</sup> From the existing parish records there are some workhouse records that have survived but many are incomplete.<sup>2</sup> In addition there are the returns made by parishes to central government and Eden's *The State of the Poor*, which help to fill out the picture.<sup>3</sup> In Surrey in 1834 most indoor poor were being relieved by their own parish, though in the five Gilbert Act Unions the workhouses served more than one parish.<sup>4</sup> Seventy workhouses were in existence in 1777, including sixteen in the hundred of Brixton, five in the hundred of Kingston and six in the hundred of Wallington.<sup>5</sup> By 1803 ninety-nine parishes maintained "all or part of their poor in workhouses" amounting to some 5,268 persons compared with 4,770 in 1776.<sup>6</sup> This did not mean that there were ninety-nine workhouses in existence. The Ash Union, for example, comprised five parishes and some parishes farmed out their poor.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Discussed in Chapter Four: Outdoor relief consisting of pensions; clothing allowances; occasional doles as result of sickness, unemployment childbirth and large families.

<sup>2</sup> Information on workhouses in Abinger, Bletchingley, Great Bookham, Byfleet, Chertsey, Chobham, Cranleigh, Dorking, Egham, Epsom, Ewhurst, Farnham, Godalming, Godstone, Guildford, Haslemere, Lingfield, Mickleham, Ockley, Walton-on-Thames and Witley.

<sup>3</sup> W. Eden, *The state of the poor* 3 (London, Frank Cass and Co, 1966 reprint), pp. 693-726, and Abstract Returns 1776, Reports from Committees of the House of Commons First series IX 1777, pp.172-74 and Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII pp.502-13 and Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1818 (82) XIX pp.444-52, also Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie pp. 165A – 75A and C. H. Maclean pp. 528A – 30A.

<sup>4</sup> 1782, 22 Geo III, c. 83 Ash Union – Ash, Normandy, Puttenham, Frimley and Long Sutton; Reigate Union – Reigate Borough, Reigate Foreign, Horley, Nutfield and Headley; Hambledon Union –Chiddingfold, Bramley, Dunsfold and Hambledon; Cranleigh; Farnham

<sup>5</sup> Abstract Returns 1776 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons First series IX 1777 pp.172-74 and Reports from Committees Provisions for the Poor IX 1774-1802 pp. 468-70.

<sup>6</sup> Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804(175) XIII p.502-13.

<sup>7</sup> Wallington farmed out poor to a workhouse in Southwark Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804(175) XIII p.508.

*The setting up of the workhouse system*

In 1597 “working houses” received statutory sanction but only as privately endowed institutions, and under the 1601 consolidating statute parishes were at liberty to set up workhouses where the poor could be set to work.<sup>8</sup> It was not until the late seventeenth century and the problems of increased destitution that interest in the use of the workhouse to alleviate poverty developed. Able-bodied paupers, perceived as lazy and dissolute, had to be forced to work and it was now the “deterrent aspect of the workhouse” that was important.<sup>9</sup> The Workhouse or General Act of 1722–3 permitted groups of parishes to build workhouses and apply the test whereby any person applying for relief had to enter such an institution in order to receive it. The aim was to provide relief for the weaker members of society and at the same time to provide economies for parish ratepayers by setting the able-bodied to work. Under the law, contractors could provide both indoor and outdoor relief, although workhouse contracting alone was the most popular option. As Brundage has noted, those parishes that took advantage of the act and built a union workhouse “seem to have been pleased with the system on the whole, as it offered both financial savings and lighter administrative burdens.”<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, few parishes availed themselves of this act. Instead, most of the new workhouses were built by single parishes wishing to maintain their autonomy.

*The Gilbert Act*

In 1765 Thomas Gilbert drew up a scheme that envisaged the workhouse as an institution to care for the sick and elderly, offer work to the able-bodied unemployed and correction

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<sup>8</sup> 39 Elizabeth c.5 and 43 Elizabeth c.2

<sup>9</sup> A. Brundage, *The English poor laws 1700–1930* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002), p.12.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

to the feckless.<sup>11</sup> He belonged to a reform movement more concerned about the level of poverty rather than the amount of money needed in poor rates to provide relief. The 1782 Gilbert Act introduced the necessary permissive legislation for parishes to form unions to build larger workhouses. Under this act parishes had the option of establishing new administrative unions, if two-thirds of their major landowners and ratepayers were in agreement to join together for the purpose of building and maintaining a workhouse. The size of the unions was strictly controlled by the requirement that parishes within a union had to lie within a ten-mile radius. In these unions, magistrates replaced overseers with paid guardians chosen from lists submitted by the parishes. The authorities excluded the able-bodied from these workhouses, which aimed solely to care for the aged, impotent and children. Instead, the guardians set the able-bodied to work outside the workhouse and, failing that, Parliament sanctioned the payment of outdoor relief to them.

The number of parishes directly affected by Gilbert's Act was small. In 1834 there were only sixty-seven Gilbert Act unions, comprising approximately six per cent of the parishes in England and Wales. In rural Surrey there were five Gilbert Act unions: Ash, Hambledon, Reigate, Cranleigh and Farnham.<sup>12</sup> The Reigate Union workhouse was built in 1795 at the cost of £1000, leading Majendie to comment in his report that, like all workhouses built under the Gilbert Act, it was designed in "too expensive a style."<sup>13</sup> The parishes of Cranleigh and Farnham were not incorporated with others for the management of the poor, but other parishes might pay for accommodation in their workhouse.<sup>14</sup> Womersley, for example, paid a rent for the use of Cranleigh's. This proved acceptable to both parishes until 1821 when the Cranleigh vestry undertook a cost-cutting exercise and decided to reduce the size of the workhouse which, when full, was capable

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<sup>11</sup> T. Gilbert, *A scheme for the better relief and employment of the poor: humbly submitted to the consideration of the members of both Houses of Parliament by a member of parliament* (London, 1765).

<sup>12</sup> 1782, 22 Geo III, c. 83 Ash Union – Ash, Normandy, Puttenham, Frimley and Long Sutton; Reigate Union – Reigate Borough, Reigate Foreign, Horley, Nutfield and Headley; Hambledon Union – Chiddingfold, Bramley, Dunsfold, Hambledon; Cranleigh; Farnham.

<sup>13</sup> Eden, *The state* 3, p.719, and Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 173A.

<sup>14</sup> SHC P58/1/1, 'Cranleigh vestry minute book-copy of Return sent to Poor Law Commissioners 1833'.

of housing 150 paupers. At the time it only housed twenty-one paupers from Cranleigh and sixteen from Wonersh. The Cranleigh parish demanded the payment of all arrears of interest and rents for the use of the house from the parish of Wonersh, threatening that if the latter did not pay the outstanding £166 3s 1d, its paupers “will be turned out of the house.” The dispute finally ended when the Wonersh vestry agreed to pay £160 to settle the arrears.<sup>15</sup>

*The number of people relieved in the workhouse*

Unfortunately it is not possible to quantify accurately the actual number of people relieved inside and outside the workhouse before 1834. Parliamentary returns of 1776, 1802–3 and 1813–15 provide a number of statistics that, to a certain extent, illustrate the number of poor who were relieved by the workhouse system, but they do contain inconsistencies.<sup>16</sup> As Taylor has pointed out, these returns are sometimes imperfect because overseers varied in their use of the term “workhouse” in making the returns to Parliament: “some overseers made returns for what were not more than rent-free dwellings where neither work nor regimen were provided.”<sup>17</sup>

There are also other problems using these sources; for example the return of 1776 is incomplete because it omitted workhouses set up under local Acts of Parliament that were included in later returns. Both the 1803 and 1813–1815 returns did not pinpoint the number of workhouses and only specified the number of paupers who were relieved indoors in each parish. As noted above, more than one parish might use a particular workhouse, so when a parish referred to a workhouse it did not necessarily mean the parish had one of its own. Moreover, none of the questionnaires succeeded in collecting

<sup>15</sup> SHC P58/1/1, ‘Cranleigh vestry minute book 12 December 1821 and 1 January 1822’.

<sup>16</sup> Abstract Returns 1776, Reports from Committees of the House of Commons First series IX 1777 pp.172–74, and Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII pp.502–13, and Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1818 (82) XIX pp.444–52.

<sup>17</sup> J.S. Taylor, ‘The Unreformed Workhouse 1776–1834’, in E.W. Martin(ed), *Comparative development in social welfare* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1972), p.58.



responses from every parish in the county. Even though there are imperfections in the returns, they remain a useful source. As Taylor and Hampson believe, the data gives some indication of workhouse provision, noting that they do provide “a rough notion of numerical dimensions found in no other contemporary source.”<sup>18</sup>

The 1776 survey asked three questions of relevance to workhouses: how much rent was paid for workhouses and habitations for the poor; how many workhouses existed; and how many inmates could each workhouse accommodate. From these returns, the first national accounting for workhouses was completed and the answers revealed the existence of 1,970 workhouses that together could hold a total of 90,000 paupers, ranging in size from two to 500 inmates. Bearing in mind that the actual number of pauper inmates was not recorded in the returns, and houses under local acts were excluded (most of the largest workhouses were under such acts and about two thirds of these were in East Anglia, London, Bristol and Liverpool), they do give a rough indication of the workhouse population. Slack has estimated that by 1782 one third of all the 13,000 English poor law administrative units had access to a workhouse either in their own or neighbouring parish see Table 5.1.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> E.M. Hampson, *The treatment of poverty in Cambridgeshire 1597–1834* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1934), p.99.

<sup>19</sup> P. Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531–1782* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1992), p.43.

Table 5.1 *Surrey workhouses in 1776*

Workhouses 1776	Places Available	Workhouses 1776	Places Available	Workhouses 1776	Places Available
Abinger	30	Egham	36	(Putney)	70
Albury	18	Epsom	60	Reigate Borough	30
(Barnes )	20	Esher	34	Reigate Foreign	40
(Battersea)	70	Farnham	65	(Richmond)	90
Betchworth	30	Frimley	12	(Rotherhithe)	200
(Beddington)	10	Godalming	76	Send and Ripley	4
(Bermondsey)	291	Guildford (Holy Trinity)	20	Shere	40
Bletchingley	50	Guildford(St Mary)	24	(Southwark – St George)	220
Burstow	15	Guildford (St Nicolas)	20	(Southwark St John)	250
(Camberwell)	100	Hambleton	8	(Southwark St Olave)	220
(Carshalton)	20	Haslemere	30	(Southwark St Saviour's)	600
Chaldon	12	Horne	20	(Southwark St Thomas)	23
(Cheam)	14	(Kingston)	288	Stoke D'abernon	12
Chertsey	70	(Lambeth)	270	(Streatham)	30
Chiddingfold	12	Limpsfield	30	Thames Ditton	30
Chobham	30	(Mauldon)	12	Walton upon Thames	50
West Clandon	4	(Mitcham)	60	(Wandsworth)	120
Cobham	40	(Moreton)	18	Weybridge	20
(Christ Church)	150	(Mortlake)	40	Wisley	8
(Croydon)	80	(Newington)	200	Witley	30
West Clandon	4	Ockley	25	Woking	40
Chobham	40	Oxted	50	Wootton	25
Dorking	80	(Petersham)	6		
Effingham	6 families	Pirbright	30		
Not included:					
Ash Union					
Cranleigh Union					

Source: Appendix to the Report from the Committee to Inspect and Consider the Returns made by the Overseers of the Poor IX 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1777 pp. 172–4.

In 1802–3 a more comprehensive survey was completed and 3,765 of the 14,611 parishes that responded to the survey confirmed they used a workhouse. The 1802–3

return indicates that of the total number of 725,566 paupers at the time only 83,468 were returned as “in workhouses or houses of industry”. The total number receiving assistance in a workhouse in 1802 was 8 per cent of the population.<sup>20</sup> The 1803 returns also suggest that the counties spending most on workhouse relief comprised mainly the eastern and south-eastern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Sussex, Essex, Middlesex, Kent and Surrey. Taylor has calculated that half of all workhouse inmates in 1803 and 1813–15 were in south-eastern England, an area that held only a third of the population.<sup>21</sup> Most workhouses in the seven counties were small, the average amounting to twenty-seven inmates compared to a national mean of twenty-two inmates in 1803.<sup>22</sup> The impression made by the returns is that the typical workhouse was an institution of between twenty and fifty inmates and widely dispersed in England, but more common in urban areas and in south-eastern England than elsewhere. They provided relief for approximately one-fifth of those on permanent relief, although this proportion excludes children, vagrants and occasional recipients (see Table 5.2).<sup>23</sup>

The inquiry for the years 1813–1815 showed that the number of paupers had risen to 939,977 with an average of 93,141 relieved in workhouses each year. From the chart overleaf it can be seen those receiving indoor relief in Surrey was approximately five per cent of the population and a larger percentage of the population were relieved outside the workhouse. In rural Surrey the figures for 1803 and 1815 show that 73 per cent of workhouses had approximately thirty or fewer inmates and only the larger parishes of Dorking, Epsom, Farnham, Kingston and Godalming could accommodate more than fifty inmates (see Table 5.2).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII p. 502–13.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, ‘The unreformed’, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>24</sup> Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII p. 502–13 and Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1818 (82) XIX pp.444–52.

Table 5.2 *Workhouse relief 1803–1815*

<b>ENGLAND AND WALES</b>				
% of Workhouse Relief Related To Total Population	1803	1813	1814	1815
Total Number In Receipt of Poor Relief	1,040,716 (11.4%)	971,913 (9.2%)	953,995(8.9%)	895,973(8.2%)
Permanently Poor Relieved In Workhouses	83,468 (0.9%)	97,223 (0.9%)	94,085(0.9%)	88,115(0.8%)
<b>SURREY</b>				
Total Number In Receipt Of Poor Relief	36,140 (33%)	22,298(18%)	23,431(19%)	23,034(18%)
Permanently Poor Relieved In Workhouses	5,268(5%)	6,382(5%)	6,491(5%)	6,224(5%)

Source: Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII p.502–13 and Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns for (1813–15) 1818 (82) XIX pp.444–52.

The national figures for 1803 and 1813–15 in Table 5.3 suggest that there was no significant increase in the number either of parishes using workhouses or of workhouse inmates. It is also possible to trace from 1776 to 1834 the capacity of certain Surrey workhouses and the number of inmates from official returns and Eden's Report.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Only the six workhouses listed can be documented from 1776–1834.

Table 5.3 1776 –1834 Capacity of six Surrey workhouses

Parish	Epsom Workhouse	Farnham Workhouse	Witley Workhouse	Egham Workhouse	Dorking Workhouse	Ockley Workhouse
1776 Return, The Number of Persons Workhouse Accommodates	60	65	30	36	80	25
1776 Actual Inmates	Not Given	77	Not Given	Not Given	Not Given	Not Given
1779 Eden's Report, The Number of Persons Workhouse Accommodates	75	New workhouse built 1791	Not Given	Not Given	Not Given	Not Given
1779 Actual Inmates	66	124	Not Given	Not Given	Not Given	Not Given
1803 Return, The Actual Inmates In Workhouse	72	77	40	54	66	21
1834 Maclean Poor Law Report , The Number of Persons Workhouse Accommodates	90	300	80	60	100	30
1834 Maclean Poor Law Report, The Actual Inmates	80	58	40	46	73	31

Source: W. Eden, *The State of the Poor* 3 Parochial Report on Surrey (London, Frank Cass and Company, 1966 reprint) pp. 693–724, Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII pp. 172–74 ; Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie pp.165A–75A and C. H. Maclean pp. 528A–30A.

The figures suggest that in spite of an increase in the size of workhouse accommodation by 1834 there was not a significant rise in the workhouse population in all six Surrey workhouses (see Table 5.4). Workhouse accommodation may have been extended towards the end of the eighteenth century but by 1834 a change of policy can be identified and many Surrey parishes had not increased the number they kept in their workhouses. For example, the large Cranleigh workhouse could accommodate 150 inmates but was

only housing on average forty-two paupers by 1822. As a result, the parish pulled down the west wing and built a schoolroom for the children of the parish and converted a building known as the hospital into two tenements and the dying room in the east wing into two tenements to provide homes for homeless poor families.<sup>26</sup> It is also evident from Maclean's report that the nine workhouses he visited were not full to their capacity as shown in Table 5.4. Of course these figures are only for one year but they are in line with other Surrey workhouse records.<sup>27</sup> The 1834 Poor Law Report and the Answers to Rural Queries do not provide a national survey of all parishes but from the information available there is no reason to suspect there was any great change in the number of workhouses built at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In rural Surrey the only new name in the Poor Law report of 1834 was that of Tanridge which had failed to make a return in 1776.<sup>28</sup> My research on Surrey confirms Taylor's view that the Webbs' assertion that workhouses were overcrowded at the beginning of the nineteenth century needs qualification.

Table 5.4 *Accommodation in nine workhouses in 1834*

Workhouse	Available Accommodation	Actual Inmates
Ockley	30	21
Kingston	100	80
Guildford	50	37
Witley	80	40
Dorking	100	73
Farnham	300	58
Epsom	90	80
Chertsey	130	45
Egham	60	46

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean pp. 528A–530A .

<sup>26</sup> SHC P58/1/1, 'Cranleigh vestry minute book 2 July 1822 and 29 April 1825'.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, and SHC 35521/2/4 and 35521/2/5, Great Bookham workhouse records May 1823–June 1836.

<sup>28</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 173A .

### *Inmates*

The unreformed workhouse tended to be responsible for the elderly, sick, pregnant, young, impotent poor and “worn out people.”<sup>29</sup> In fact most parishes perceived the workhouse to be no more than an asylum for the sick, elderly and seriously disabled.<sup>30</sup> Oxley has viewed it as an “ancestor of most of the institutions which form part of the modern social services.”<sup>31</sup> Hitchcock has also identified the workhouse as “a haven of last resort” for people, who were infirm, abandoned by friends and family or those incapable of work.<sup>32</sup> For some, a considerable part of their lives was spent in the workhouse. Records for both the Great Bookham workhouse show this in Table 5.5 and records for the Bletchingley workhouse in Table 5.6.

Table 5.5 *Great Bookham workhouse inmates: May 1823 to June 1836*

Great Bookham Workhouse Inmates	May 1823	June 1836
Richard Bixley	69 yrs	81 yrs
Ann Bixley	73 yrs	85 yrs
Sarah Whitebread	55 yrs	68 yrs
Mary Fludgate	50 yrs	63 yrs
Pamela Cox	41 yrs	54 yrs
Rebecca Eades	35 yrs	47 yrs
James Gale	39 yrs	52 yrs

Source: SHC 35521/2/4 and 35521/2/5  
Great Bookham Workhouse Inventories May 1823 to June 1836.

<sup>29</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p. 530A .

<sup>30</sup> A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp.34-47 and Hampson, '*The treatment*', p.103, also G.W. Oxley, *Poor relief in England* (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1974), pp. 79-101.

<sup>31</sup> Oxley, *Poor relief*, p.79.

<sup>32</sup> T. Hitchcock, (1985) 'The English workhouse: A study in institutional poor relief in selected counties 1696-1750' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford), p. 193.

Table 5.6 *Bletchingley workhouse inmates recorded in September 1835*

Bletchingley Workhouse Inmates	September 1835	Time Spent In Workhouse Up To 1835
Issaac Rockford	69 yrs	15 yrs
James Roots	88 yrs	10 yrs
John Worsfold	66 yrs	8 yrs
James Cuddington	77yrs	6 yrs
Peter Snelling	70yrs	3 yrs
James Tasker	68 yrs	3 yrs
Thomas Webb	74 yrs	1 ¼ yrs(left)
James Wortley	65 yrs	1 yr
Thomas Standing	74 yrs	2 mths(left)
George Ramsay	58 yrs	2 mths
Edward Ramsay	10 yrs	2 mths
William Ramsay	7 yrs	2 mths
James Rye	24 yrs	4 mths
Benjamin Laker	6 yrs	born in house
James Terry	5 yrs	6 mths
Sarah Best	83 yrs	25 yrs
Elizabeth Fairall	82 yrs	11 yrs
Elizabeth Lepperd	68 yrs	6 yrs
Jane English	25 yrs	8 yrs
Elizabeth Dalton	67 yrs	3 yrs
Ann Webb	76 yrs	1 ¼ yrs
Mary Ramsay	42 yrs	2 mths
Amelia Buckland	24 yrs	3 mths
Mary Peyton	67 yrs	6 mths
Elizabeth Bashford	12 yrs	5 yrs

Source: P20/6/5 Bletchingley Vestry Minutes: Bletchingley Workhouse Inmates Recorded In September 1836.

Commentators at the time, such as Townsend and Brereton, acknowledged this point and also realised that the poor hated the idea of entering a workhouse, dreading the loss of liberty.<sup>33</sup> Even when conditions in the workhouse were relatively good they strove to avoid becoming inmates. Taylor has pointed it was a “refuge from the worst calamities.”<sup>34</sup> Eastwood also believes that the fear of entry to the workhouse did help to diminish “frivolous claims for relief.”<sup>35</sup> For example, Mary Punter requested a weekly allowance from the Egham vestry on account of a broken leg that had left her lame and unable to work. Mr Duck, the overseer, gave her one payment of 5s and informed her that if she was not satisfied, a place could be found for her in the workhouse.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> J.A. Townsend, (1786) *A dissertation on the poor laws* (London, printed for C. Dilly, 1786).

<sup>34</sup> Hitchcock, ‘D.Phil thesis’, p. 193, and G. Taylor, *The problem of poverty 1660–1834* (London, Longman Green, 1969), p.51.

<sup>35</sup> D. Eastwood, ‘The making of the new poor law redivivus’, *Past and Present*, 127 (1990) 191.

<sup>36</sup> SHC ACC 1498/1, ‘Egham Vestry Minutes 5 November 1826’.



Eden's breakdown shown in Table 5.7 of the workhouse population of the Epsom workhouse amply illustrates the point that the old, children, sick and insane dominated the workhouse population.

Table 5.7 *Epsom's workhouse population in 1797*

Age	Numbers	Reasons Admitted
0–9 yrs	9	Orphan, Bastard, Orphan , Mother Worthless, Bastard, Bastard, Three Bastard Orphans.
10–19 yrs	14	Disorderly, Diseased, Pregnant, Father In Army, Bastard Father In Army, Bastard, Mother Worthless, Father Army, Bastard, Two Daughters Of A Smuggler, Bastard, Orphan.
20–39 yrs	3	Bad Disorder, Leprosy, Idiot
40–49 yrs	3	Idiot, Lunatic, Idiot
50–59 yrs	4	Worthless, Lunatic, Paralytic, Feeble
60–69 yrs	8	Cripple, Stupid, Deformed, Diseased, Diseased, Stupid, No Regular Habits Of Industry, Sickly
70 yrs +	6	Paralytic, Asthmatic, Unsteady, Worn Out, Impotent, Aged

Source: W. Eden, *The State of the Poor 3 Parochial Report on Surrey* (London, Frank Cass and Company, 1966 reprint), pp. 693–711.

Indoor relief was evidently mainly reserved for the “most necessitous cases.”<sup>37</sup> This conclusion partly supports Smith's argument that the potentially more expensive paupers, the very old, were often taken from the outdoor pension list and placed in institutional care.<sup>38</sup> There were reasons why inmates who were part of the working age population entered a workhouse, usually because of insanity, affliction with venereal disease or being disabled. Eden's findings for Surrey support this. King has also shown that the aged and children aged group ten to nineteen years comprised the bulk of the workhouse

<sup>37</sup> Taylor, 'The unreformed', p. 63.

<sup>38</sup> R. M. Smith, 'Ageing and well-being in early modern England: Pension trends and gender preference under the English old poor law 1650-1800' in P. Johnson and P. Thane (eds), *Old age from antiquity to post-modernity* (London, Routledge, 1998), pp. 64–95.

population.<sup>39</sup> My research on Surrey comes to a similar conclusion. The breakdown of the Bletchingley workhouse population over a period of fifteen years (Table 5.8) shows this and the Great Bookham workhouse records for the year 1823–1824 show a similar picture. It is possible to identify younger individuals and the old staying within the workhouse throughout the year while family groups enter and leave after a short stay (Table 5.9).

Table 5.8 *A breakdown of Bletchingley's workhouse population from 1820–1835*

Place	0–9 yrs	10–19 yrs	20–39 yrs	40–49 yrs	50–59 yrs	60 + yrs
Bletchingley Workhouse 1820 – 1835	13%	53%	3%	3%	5%	23%

Source: SHC P20/6/7, The percentage of the institutional poor in the parish of Bletchingley in the various age ranges.

<sup>39</sup> S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p.8 and p.163.

Table 5.9 Great Bookham Workhouse Inmates 1823–1824

Great Bookham Workhouse Inmates 1823–1824	May 1823	Aug	Nov	Jan 1824	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
John Gale 88 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Anne Gale 79 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
George Freeland 73 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6s	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Anne Freeland 63 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
James Finch 77 yrs					3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Richard Bixley 69 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	left										
Ann Bixley 73 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	dead												
Henry Hunt 70 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	left								
Mary Hunt 68 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	left								
Ann Cook 76 yrs	3/6s	3/6s	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
James Arrow 76 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	left					
William Britt 71 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	dead											
Anne Gardiner 74 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Sarah Whitebread 55 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Mary Fludgate 50 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Elizabeth Bonsey 46 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	left												
Pamela Cox 41 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6s	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Rebecca Eades 35 yrs	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6s	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Sarah Arris 85 yrs							3/6	3/6s	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
James Gale 39 yrs	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s
Sarah Worsfold 34 yrs				3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	left							
Hannah Worsfold 13 yrs				3/6	3/6	3/6	left											
Edward Worsfold 7 yrs				2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	left							
John Worsfold 5 yrs				2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	left							
Sarah Worsfold 1 ½ yrs				2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	left							

Great Bookham Work house Inmates 1823-1824	May 1823	Aug	Nov	Jan 1824	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
John Worsfold				4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	left							
Henry Graftam 15 yrs	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s
Charles Stent 13 yrs		4s	left Jan															
James Port 18 yrs				4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	left						
Benjamin Stevens 17 yrs			4s	left														
Anne Port 16 yrs					2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	2/6	left						
John Bone 74 yrs					3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	left								
James Gale 40 yrs					4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s
Charles Collins 39 yrs					4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s	4s
Anne Henly 20 yrs						3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	dead								
Mary Henly								born	2/6	2/6	2/6	dead						
widow Dale 63 yrs											3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
widow Bone 65 yrs														3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
James Finch (No age given)																		3/6
Thomas Pithers 69 yrs																		3/6

SHC 35521/2/4 Great Bookham inmates workhouse May 1823 to March 1824

*Children in the workhouse*

Orphaned or pauper children were often relieved in a workhouse on a temporary basis. In parishes without workhouses it was the custom to find foster homes for homeless children or to allow poor parents a family allowance for children living at home, particularly in the cases of large families.<sup>40</sup> Eden's listings of workhouse inmates indicate that children often made up over half of the workhouse population in Surrey.

These children were expected to work but they also received some schooling. In rural Surrey this mostly took place out of the house, although in the Bletchingley workhouse it was the job of the master or mistress to organise in-house schooling and they set aside two hours per day for reading and writing.<sup>41</sup> Oxley has commented that the quality and content of such education must have varied enormously, depending on the time given and the standard of teaching. In addition, children helped with domestic chores in the house and sometimes learned a trade practised by some elderly inmate that was "thought adequate vocational training for those who could not expect to occupy any but the lowest rungs of the economic ladder."<sup>42</sup> Between the age of fourteen to sixteen children usually left the workhouse to become apprentices to local tradesmen or farmers. Oxley has also noted from his research "young deserted, unmarried and widowed mothers" were the largest able-bodied group in most workhouses and this was also the case in Surrey.<sup>43</sup>

*The workhouse: the solution to increasing rural unemployment?*

Increasing rural unemployment after 1815 led to an expansion of outdoor relief, not because the workhouses were full but because the workhouse appeared to be an

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<sup>40</sup> Taylor, 'The unreformed', p.65.

<sup>41</sup> SHC 1/48/80, 'Bletchingley vestry minutes copy rule book for the workhouse October 1816'.

<sup>42</sup> Oxley, *Poor relief*, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

inappropriate answer for short-term unemployment, especially in winter months. For the able-bodied in need of work, the workhouse was no solution since such poverty was the result of unemployment due to problems such as downturn in trade, the cyclical nature of agricultural work, or sickness or incapacity caused by an accident. Taking people into a workhouse under such circumstances “could be positively counter-productive, breaking up the home”<sup>44</sup> and made it more difficult to start work once more when it became available.

Able-bodied males who did enter the workhouse were perceived in a derisory manner. The Betchingley parish reported they considered the expense of keeping the able-bodied in the workhouse as “a great abuse” and, on the occasions they did, it was usually because these characters were seen as worthless.<sup>45</sup> The Mickleham vestry showed a similar concern and recorded in 1816 that “the poor house was never intended for the reception of the strong and healthy men but only for those whose age, sickness or infirmity entitle them to the charity of the parish.” As a result of this ruling, seven men were told by the vestry that in future they would have to pay 1s a week for their lodging and one man 2s a week if they were to remain in the workhouse.<sup>46</sup> It is also evident that troublesome characters, who were considered to be too costly for the parish to maintain out of the workhouse, were sometimes admitted. Eden in his survey described one man in the Epsom workhouse aged fifty-four as “addicted to drinking and an idle worthless man.”<sup>47</sup> Maclean also found four able-bodied men out of seventy-three inmates in the Dorking workhouse, and noted they were “indifferent characters and bad workmen; and it was thought cheaper to put them into the house.”<sup>48</sup> As Taylor has noted, it was important for overseers to “relieve the poor in the least troublesome manner possible.”<sup>49</sup> For

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>45</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 173A.

<sup>46</sup> SHC MIC/9/1, 'Mickleham vestry minutes 8 September 1816'.

<sup>47</sup> Eden, *'The state'* 3, p.695.

<sup>48</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p.529A.

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, *'The unreformed'*, p.64.

example, in Dorking Susan Etherington and her “two idiot children of John Etherington” were admitted to the workhouse but the rest of the family remained outside.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, most parishes were anxious to separate the idle poor from the sick, young and elderly, although this was not always possible in small workhouses. This is evident in Dorking where, from its inception, the select vestry had been anxious to separate families or persons who were often temporary residents in winter months. They viewed separation as important because they considered it less troublesome and an “infinite advantage in the management of the house.”<sup>51</sup> The three Guildford parishes complained in 1831 that they had “experienced very great inconvenience in the issuing of tickets for beds to casual paupers” in the workhouse and so had decided to provide a separate room where such paupers could be lodged for the night.<sup>52</sup>

#### *The cost of the workhouse system*

By 1796, as economic conditions worsened, increasing anxiety about rising relief costs led to a change in policy towards the poor. The annual expenditure on poor relief in England and Wales for the years 1783–1785 averaged approximately £2,000,000, an increase of 33% on expenditure over 1776 and an increase of 190% on expenditure for the period 1748–50.<sup>53</sup> Contemporaries recognised that the workhouse system was expensive and inflexible, and overseers and justices were empowered to order outdoor relief without imposing the workhouse test. Digby believes that financial disillusionment brought about by the high cost of indoor relief meant that before 1834 there had been a widespread acceptance by parishes of relieving the poor in their own homes by means of outdoor

<sup>50</sup> SHC P65/1/1, ‘Dorking select vestry 8 October 1822’.

<sup>51</sup> SHC P65/1/1, ‘Dorking select vestry 31 July 1820’.

<sup>52</sup> Three Guildford parishes Holy Trinity, St Mary, St Nicholas. BRA/MA/1 Guildford St Mary vestry minutes 1 August 1831.

<sup>53</sup> Abstract Returns 1776 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons First series IX 1777 pp.172–4 and Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII pp.502–13 and Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1818 (82) XIX pp. 444–52.

allowances.<sup>54</sup> This can be clearly illustrated by Table 5.10. In answers to Rural Queries from the seven parishes listed the proportion of people receiving outdoor relief on a weekly basis clearly outweighed by far those maintained in the parish workhouse.<sup>55</sup>

Table 5.10 *Comparison of indoor and outdoor relief*

Parish	Workhouse Inmates For One Week	Those Granted Outdoor Relief For One Week
Great Bookham	13	18
Haslemere	13	124
Godstone	24	65
Ewhurst	13	96
Farnham	55	350
Guildford St Nicholas	13	52
Lingfield	26	110

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners, Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 22 and 23 pp.474b–488b.

The 1803 returns provide detailed costs of maintaining the poor inside and outside a workhouse. Using these figures, Taylor has estimated that because of the overheads incurred in running a workhouse, on average it was about four times more expensive to relieve paupers there as opposed to granting outdoor relief.<sup>56</sup> Outdoor relief could be given as a weekly pension or, more often during the early nineteenth century, on a casual or supplementary basis. For example, a cost comparison for the parish of Egham (Table 5.11) illustrates this.

<sup>54</sup> Digby, '*Pauper*', p.3.

<sup>55</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 22 and 23 pp.474b–488b.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, '*The unreformed*', p. 63.



Table 5.11 *A weekly cost comparison in Egham between indoor and outdoor relief in 1833*

Egham Parish	Weekly Outdoor Relief	Indoor Relief
	No Set Figure Negotiated Within The Vestry	Weekly Allowances: Adult 4s 4d Child 2s 2d
Weekly Total: Elizabeth Blay And Her Four Children 1 <sup>st</sup> July 1833	6s	13s (would be allowance)

Source: 1498/2 Egham Vestry Minutes 1<sup>st</sup> July 1833 SHC

Even taking into account the extra allowances paid for clothing, fuel and perhaps rent during the course of the year, indoor relief was more expensive. This is supported by Longmate who noted that a pauper would often accept 1s per week from the parish to stay out of the workhouse while his maintenance inside the house, “allowing for clothes and medical attention as well as food and shelter cost at least 2s 6d to 4s a week and often more.”<sup>57</sup> Thus at Byfleet in 1832, the cost of maintaining five members of the Wilson family in the workhouse (see Table 5.12) amounted to 15s 6d a week. This is in excess of any weekly outdoor allowance given to families of similar size in the south east at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Snell estimates that in the south east at the beginning of the nineteenth century the amount given was between 2s 6d and 3s a week per person, with a smaller child allowance.<sup>58</sup> At Byfleet it cost 10s a week to maintain a family of similar size outside the workhouse but this did not include any extra allowances for clothing and shoes (see Table 5.12). However, the cost of running the workhouse and paying the governor has to be added to Byfleet’s indoor figures.

<sup>57</sup> N. Longmate, *The workhouse a social history* (London, Pimlico, 2003), p.33.

<sup>58</sup> K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor social change and agrarian England 1660–1900* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.131–2.

Table 5.12 *Byfleet cost comparison indoor and outdoor relief*

i) Indoor Relief – Cost Per Week October 1831, January 1832 And December 1832.

Name	Age October 1831	Cost Per Week October 1831	Cost Per Week January 1832	Cost Per Week December 1832
Phillis Wilson	28 yrs	4s	4s	4s
Henry Wilson	10 yrs	4s	4s	4s
William Wilson	6 yrs	2s 6d	2s 6d	2s 6d
James Wilson	4 yrs	2s 6d	2s 6d	2s 6d
Phillis Wilson	Born Workhouse November 1831		2s 6d	2s 6d

2) Outdoor Relief–Cost Per Week December 1831 and January 1832

Name	Age	Cost Per Week December 1831	Cost Per Week January 1832
Brown's boy	Not Given	2s	2s
Brown's girl	Not Given	2s	2s
White widow	Not Given	2s 6d	2s 6d
Dawes girl	"Small Child"	1s 6d	1s 6d
Jordan's child	Not Given	2s	2s

Source: SHC PSH/BY/8/1, Byfleet Vestry Minutes Workhouse Accounts: Weekly Relief given from October 1831–December 1834.

### *A profitable institution*

In 1797 Jeremy Bentham suggested the idea of a self-supporting workhouse. His vision was of a polygonal building that would accommodate 2,000 paupers and would eliminate the need for outdoor relief. He also planned 250 houses of industry all over England and his elaborate plan became in the end "a pattern for a new society to exist within a free capitalist society."<sup>59</sup> His vision for the great "panopticon" never materialised and by 1811

<sup>59</sup> J.R. Poynter, *Society and pauperism English ideas on poor relief 1795 –1834* ( London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p.109.

the government showed no interest in his ambitious plan. By 1834 the term 'workhouse' and 'poor house' became interchangeable. Taylor has pointed out that "when workhouse appears in local records it merely means in most instances that the parish had at one time made an attempt to work the inmates."<sup>60</sup> It is now evident that because schemes to profit from pauper labour needed expensive supervision, they were not cost effective. The Webbs found that the repeated attempts to make the poor self-supporting were a "uniform failure." They commented that the management of workhouse schemes was often unimaginative and inefficient, while inmates were often less than ideal employees. They also argued that paupers worked slackly because their livelihood was assured. Self evidently too, the elderly sick and very young were not ideal candidates for profitable employment as many could not complete a full day's work.<sup>61</sup> Townsend commented on the contemporary view that it was thought that if the poor lived and worked under one roof they would be cheaper to maintain than dispersed in their cottages. In fact, "they are maintained at a most enormous expense." He went on to note "it is not reasonable to imagine that men deprived of liberty will work for others with the same cheerful activity."<sup>62</sup>

In 1803 out of the £40,000 spent in England and Wales in efforts to employ the workhouse paupers, only £70,000 was earned.<sup>63</sup> Taylor also refers to this as "small potatoes" when relief was costing over £4,000,000 a year and about a quarter of it was spent on providing workhouse relief.<sup>64</sup> The high costs of relief should have been an incentive for employing workhouse inmates but, with the decline of hand spinning, the workhouse, was a casualty of industrialisation. The 1803 returns appear to bear this out (see Table 5.13).

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<sup>60</sup> Taylor, 'The unreformed', p.61.

<sup>61</sup> S.Webb and B. Webb, '*English poor law history Part 1: the old poor law*' (London, Frank Cass, reprint 1963), pp. 222–7.

<sup>62</sup> Townsend, '*A dissertation*'.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, 'The unreformed', p. 69.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

Table 5.13 1803 *Employment of workhouse poor in six counties*

	Kent	Lancs	Norfolk	Northumberland	Oxford	Surrey
Number of parishes/places making returns	409	652	691	513	284	151
Number purchasing materials to use in working inmates	167	71	144	9	31	31
Number that spent more than was earned in attempt	55	7	6	2	6	10
Number making net profit in excess of £50 per annum or more in the attempt	16	15	13	1	6	9

Source: Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804(175) XII figures for Kent, Lancashire, Norfolk, Northumberland, and Oxford from J.S. Taylor, 'The unreformed Workhouse 1776–1834', in E.W. Martin(ed), *Comparative development in social welfare* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1972), p.69 and figures for Surrey added Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804 (175) XIII pp.502–13 .

There is no reason to suppose the Surrey experience differed greatly from other southern counties. Neuman found that in Berkshire by the beginning of the nineteenth century few workhouses continued manufacture.<sup>65</sup> Digby also found little evidence of manufacture in Norwich workhouses and that “early hopes of profit had evaporated.”<sup>66</sup> In rural Surrey the 1803 returns provide evidence of some work being carried out in workhouses. Table 5.12 gives a detailed breakdown of manufacture within twenty-three workhouses but only eight were able to earn a respectable profit and nine ran the work schemes at a loss. Some parishes combined in- house employment with sending inmates capable of work out of house for employment. The most successful schemes were operated in the parishes of Epsom, Dorking, Godstone and Witley, (see Table 5.14).

<sup>65</sup> M. Neuman, *The Speenhamland county poverty and the poor laws in Berkshire 1782–1834* (New York and London, Garland Publishing Inc, 1982), footnote 129, p. 215.

<sup>66</sup> Digby, 'Pauper', p.44.

Table 5.14 1803 Surrey workhouse earnings

Parish	1803 Number Of Persons Relieved In Workhouses Including Children	Money Earned In Any House Of Industry Or Workhouse	Money Spent In Purchasing Materials For Employing Poor In Any House Of Industry Or Workhouse	Money Earned Out Of The Workhouse
Cranleigh	54	£63 11s	£213 10s	
Frensham	30	£20	£1	
Gatton	10	-	£8 19s 6d	
Godstone	45	£128 10s 6d	£47 15s	
Wonersh	23	£15	£98	
Great Bookham	25	-	£7 12s 6d	
Chertsey	95	- # # #	£7 16s	
Stoke next to Guildford	35	£64 16s	£3 2s	
St Mary's Guildford	20	£25	£6 15s 6d	£5
St Nicholas Guildford	10	£14	£12 19s 6d	£16
Holy Trinity Guildford	10	£4 2s 6d	15s	
Worplesdon	42	£51 6s 10d	# #	
Haslemere	16	£36 8s 6d		
Thursley	26	£39 11s 5d		
Witley	40	£20 5s 2d		£46 10s 6d
Horsell	12	£5 13s 11d		
Egham	54	£5 0s 9d		£2 19s 6d
Long Ditton	23	£22 2s 4d		
Burstow	32	£22 15s 9d		
Hambledon	14	£13		
Lingfield	48	£17 6s		£17 6s
Ockham	11	£5		
Ockley	21	£6 13s 4d		
Chiddingfold	21	£56 12s		
Albury	24	£28 3s 3d	£213 10s	
Epsom	72	£37 4s 9d	£41 6s 7d	£40 11s 9d
Farnham	77	£8 12s 4d	£140 3s 7d #	
Godalming	113	£167 19s 8d	£4 10s 9d	
Charlwood	27	£25 5s	£1 18s 6d	
Bletchingley	20	18s 6d	£5 8s 7d	£12
Limpsfield	16	£1 14s	£1 9s 2d	£2 15s
Windlesham	31	£29 11s 11d	£13 3s 4d	£18 6s 9d
West Horsley	12	£29 16s 4d	£1 10s	£21 10s 6d
Dorking	66	£78 8s 3d	£124 8s 9d	£99 7s 11d

Source: Abstract of the Answers and Returns 1804(175) XIII pp.502–513 BPP.

# to establish Linen manufacture, # # no materials purchased as master of workhouse blanket maker employ poor and entitled to their earnings; # # # The contractor is entitled to the earnings of the poor

Some parishes, including the five listed below (see Table 5.15), found it more convenient and profitable to send inmates capable of work out of the house for employment and did not set up in-house workshops:

Table 5.15 *Money earned out of workhouses 1803*

Parish	1803 Number Persons Relieved In Workhouse Including Children	Money Earned Out Of The Workhouse
Ewhurst	22	£28
Walton-on-Thames	50	£33 10s 11d
Cobham	42	£50
Esher	25	£16 12s
Frimley	12	13s

Source: Abstract of the Answers and Returns BPP 1804 (175) XIII pp.502–513.

Evidence suggests that by 1815 many rural Surrey workhouses had abandoned their attempts to set inmates to work. The Reigate Union workhouse in 1803 manufactured blankets and the children were employed in spinning, although by 1834 there is no evidence of it continuing.<sup>67</sup> Sometimes the work earned a small profit but not enough to make the house self-sufficient. In the Lingfield workhouse seventy-five inmates in 1816 actively carried on employment schemes; mops produced in house were sold locally; the pigs reared on the workhouse farm sent to market; and flax seeds were offered for sale. This is one of the few workhouses where there is evidence of various work schemes in operation.<sup>68</sup> The rulebook of the Bletchingley workhouse insisted that the master ensure that all inmates capable of work were “daily employed.” They were to spin wool for mop yarn, sew and knit and the young were to be “taught and made fit for some trade.”<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Abstract of the Answers and Returns BPP 1804(175) XIII p.503.

<sup>68</sup> SHC D/P/LIN/4, ‘Lingfield parish accounts 25 March 1816, 2 August 1816, 2 May 1817’.

<sup>69</sup> SHC 1/48/80, ‘Bletchingley vestry minutes copy rule book for the workhouse October 1816’.

However, in 1827, when the workhouse held on average thirty inmates, only six people appear in the weekly workhouse accounts as earning a few shillings a week spinning or sewing.<sup>70</sup> The Worplesdon workhouse purchased no materials for manufacture but as the master of the workhouse was a blanket maker, he employed those who could work and was entitled to their earnings. He allowed them 2d out of every 1s earned.<sup>71</sup>

By 1834 many workhouses had dismantled their workrooms and preferred to send those capable of work out of the workhouse for employment. For example, the boys from the Godalming workhouse worked in the leather mills and earned 6d a day, whilst the girls earned 1s a week at the silk mills. The Ockley workhouse placed the children out to work for local farmers, earning between them £1 a week in the spring and summer months.<sup>72</sup> The Witley workhouse dispatched only one man to work for a neighbouring farmer and the parish received 3s a week for his labour.<sup>73</sup> There had been linen manufacture in the Farnham workhouse in 1803 but by 1834 it had been replaced by the manufacture of sacking, and inmates were also employed in breaking stones.<sup>74</sup> When the Poor Law Commissioners for Surrey in 1833 visited the workhouse they found most inmates too old, sickly or too young to be employed, although they did report there was evidence of employment that had operated in the past. Maclean commented that he found an unused corn-mill in the Epsom workhouse.<sup>75</sup> The vision of the workhouse as a profitable institution was never realised, although it must be recognised that the ethos of an industrious, gainfully employed labour force was important to parish vestrymen. The “work ethic gave moral substance to vestry policies designed to rescue fellow parishioners from the besetting sin of idle poverty.”<sup>76</sup>

<sup>70</sup> SHC 1/48/80, ‘Bletchingley vestry minutes October–December 1827’.

<sup>71</sup> Abstract of the Answers and Returns BPP 1804 (175) XIII p.508.

<sup>72</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean Witley p.528A and Godalming p.529A .

<sup>73</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p.529A .

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing rural England* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 167.

Admittedly, the 1803 returns and workhouse accounts take no account of private arrangements for employing the poor in-house. For example men undertook work in the workhouse garden, growing crops, caring for animals and chopping wood. In addition, no allowance is shown in the workhouse accounts when the garden or farm provided vegetables and meat for the inmates that reduced the food bill for certain months of the year. Maclean in his report did comment on the importance of the workhouse garden table (see Table 5.16).

Table 5.16 *The produce of seven workhouse gardens in Surrey*

Parish Workhouse:	Work Carried Out On The Land:
Lingfield	Reared Pigs
Ockley	1 Acre Garden, Supplied Vegetables For The House
Farnham	Garden Exceeding One Acre, For Vegetables
Epsom	Garden Two Acres, For Vegetables
Chobham	"A Very Productive Garden Of Two Acres"
Chertsey	Garden, Quarter Of An Acre
Egham	Garden One Acre, Provides Vegetables For The House And Surplus To Poor Families In The Parish

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean pp. 528A–530A .

Further tasks, such as mending and making, were also carried out in the workhouses for the benefit of inmates. Moreover, to try to minimise costs, workhouse governors used inmates to nurse and care for the sick or, educate the children.<sup>77</sup> The mistress of the Frimley workhouse insisted that all girls capable of work were to clean the building, and girls who refused were taken before a magistrate for "their idleness and disobedience."<sup>78</sup>

The parish of Egham also insisted that widows living outside the workhouse and receiving

<sup>77</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 528A–530A, and S. Williams, 'Practitioners' income and provision for the poor: parish doctors in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Social History of Medicine*, 18 (2005) 160 and 162–3 .

<sup>78</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley vestry minutes 13 June 1826'.



a weekly allowance had to attend the workhouse one day a week to offer assistance. On that day they would receive their meals and anyone refusing to comply with the order was to have her weekly allowance stopped.<sup>79</sup> Digby has shown that the industrious poor in Norfolk workhouses often received rewards in the form of small sums of money.<sup>80</sup> A similar practice can be found in Surrey in the Bletchingley workhouse, where old ladies were paid for needlework and spinning. It also paid out “encouragement money.” In May 1826 the old men received 2s 6d “encouragement money” to attend the local fair and 1s to the women and children. Again, in October the old men received 1s and the girls and boys 1s 2d.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Governorship of the workhouse*

No two parishes or contractors ran their workhouses in precisely the same way: “diversity was the hallmark of workhouse administration.”<sup>82</sup> According to Taylor, the management of the workhouse took three principal forms and this was certainly the case for Surrey.<sup>83</sup> Firstly, a parish might farm out the responsibility for providing poor relief in the parish, a practice that could be done in one of two ways. Authority was sometimes given to a pauper inmate or to someone whose economic status might otherwise qualify him for relief to run the house.<sup>84</sup>

A second option was to contract or “farm” the responsibility to an entrepreneur for a yearly lump sum and the contractor took responsibility for all aspects of the workhouse management. This had been frequently done in the eighteenth century. In Oxford advertisements were placed in Jackson’s *Oxford Journal* requesting tenders for the

<sup>79</sup> SHC ACC 1498/1, ‘Egham vestry minutes 4 December 1825’.

<sup>80</sup> Digby, *‘Pauper’*, p. 44.

<sup>81</sup> SHC 27271/48/96, ‘Bletchingley minutes May 1828 and October 1828’.

<sup>82</sup> Hitchcock, (D.Phil thesis), p.133.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor, ‘The unreformed’, pp.65–7.

<sup>84</sup> R. Burn, *The justice of the peace and parish officer IV* (London, Sweet Maxwell and Son, 1844), pp.548–9, a workhouse governor obtained a settlement if it was recognised that his position was a public annual office; the frequency of settlement cases hinging on this point suggests the frequency of near pauper appointments.

management of parish workhouses.<sup>85</sup> In 1797 contractors ran all the Surrey workhouses that Eden visited and his assessment of these was on the whole favourable. He commented that the Epsom workhouse had been farmed for over twenty years and had reduced the poor rates by half.<sup>86</sup> Exact arrangements with contractors varied but usually they provided inmates with accommodation, food and clothing and either sent them out to work or had them work in-house. In Epsom the contractor kept a high proportion or all of their wages. After 1815 contracting had become rare, attributable by Taylor to the economic crisis having made contracting too risky to manage as a profitable business.<sup>87</sup> As Surrey parish vestries faced the problem of escalating poor relief expenditure, they strove to cut costs. This was a general concern in the south of England.<sup>88</sup> Many people were also dissatisfied with this system of management. William Young believed that farming the poor destroyed the chain of social authority in parishes and eroded the vestry's authority.<sup>89</sup> In addition, allegations of corruption or mismanagement were often levied against contractors.<sup>90</sup>

By the 1820s most vestries regularly reviewed their workhouse expenditure. They realised that to run efficiently, a workhouse needed constant supervision and regular attention to the daily routine. A successful governorship of a workhouse was judged on the ability to minimise workhouse expenses on the one hand and to deal effectively with complaints from inmates, parish officers and magistrates on the other. Therefore, many workhouses reverted to the third option: parochial management with appointed salaried governors. As employees, they were less independent and this enabled the parish to keep much stricter control of workhouse expenditure. This style of management either consisted of a *per*

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<sup>85</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.168.

<sup>86</sup> Eden, *The state* 3, p.694, Surrey workhouses he visited—Epsom, Esher, Farnham, Reigate, Walton-on-Thames pp. 693–726.

<sup>87</sup> Taylor, 'The unreformed', p.66.

<sup>88</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.168.

<sup>89</sup> W. Young, *Considerations on the subject of poor houses and work houses, their pernicious tendency and their obstruction to the proposed plan for amendment of the poor laws* (London, J. Stockdale, 1796).

<sup>90</sup> J. Scott, *Observations on the present state of the parochial and vagrant poor* (London, Edward and Charles Dilly, 1773), pp. 30ff and 113.

*capita* allowance paid to the governor or a direct management scheme with a quarterly paid wage. This meant that he or she had no financial stake in the success of the house. Both these systems were still fraught with difficulties at a time when vestries were anxious to reduce poor relief expenditure.

### *Direct Management*

The direct management scheme was adopted by the Egham vestry as a beneficial way of tightening control of workhouse expenditure. In 1832 the parish paid Charles and Elizabeth Hunter £16 per annum to run the workhouse and it paid directly all the bills.<sup>91</sup> A similar arrangement can be found in Godalming where the vestry appointed Hannah Cobden governess of the poor house on a salary of £20 per year, and Henry Coston guardian of the poor on a salary of £60 per annum.<sup>92</sup> In the parish of Ewell after a dispute with the contractor of the workhouse, a Mr Ayling, the parish vestry decided to alter the contractual agreement. In 1816 the parish paid him £450 per annum, but he reported he had suffered a loss of £35 7s 3d. He complained to the vestry, and the parish agreed to continue the contract on a six months basis, but with the proviso that if the price of flour and other commodities fell, so would his contract price. He refused to enter such a contract and the parish therefore offered him instead a weekly rate per person of 4s 6d, excluding medical fees, to maintain the poor in the workhouse. No agreement was reached and the parish decided to appoint a committee that included the two churchwardens, two overseers, the vicar and ten other ratepayers for the direct management of the workhouse. Mr Ayling was then reappointed solely as governor on a salary of £10 per annum.<sup>93</sup> This scheme operated successfully until at least 1833 and the committee carefully managed the spending on poor relief, although in 1817 the committee

<sup>91</sup> SHC ACC 1498/1, 'Egham vestry minutes 27 July 1832'.

<sup>92</sup> SHC 2253/11/1, 'Godalming vestry minutes 28 March 1830'.

<sup>93</sup> SHC 3831/1/2, 'Ewell vestry minutes 8 December 1816, 8 January 1817, 31 December 1818 and 17 October 1833'.

itself did revert to a weekly allowance of 4s 6d per person for those in the workhouse.<sup>94</sup> These direct management schemes were not always very successful or long running because it was very time consuming for parishioners to administer the workhouse expenditure directly. Ratepayers with their own affairs to attend to were often unwilling or unable to give the time. This helps to explain the changing administrative policies in various parishes at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

### *Per capita allowance*

In the parish of Thames Ditton, first John Aubin and then his wife had acted as contractors for the poor between 1793 and 1816. In 1816, however, Mrs Aubin informed the vestry she could no longer continue to maintain the poor for £350 per year. Even so the parish refused to increase the sum, changed the agreement to a 4s 6d per head weekly allowance for paupers in the workhouse and appointed a new governor.<sup>95</sup> Some parishes paid the *per capita* allowance but also tried to keep strict control of the workhouse budget. In 1815 Esher paid John Griffin, governor of the workhouse, 4s 6d per head to feed and clothe the poor, the parish settling the medical bills and providing bed linen and bedding for inmates. It was also allowed that John Griffin kept the profits of the inmates' labour. After one year John Griffin relinquished control of the workhouse and James Bullen and his wife took over. On this occasion the vestry paid them a salary of 10s per week to manage the house and provided them with board and lodging. The overseers bore the charge of providing the house with all provisions. Nonetheless, in 1822 the parish reverted to paying 4s 6d per head per week for each pauper in the house with the proviso that after four weeks the amount was reduced to 4s.<sup>96</sup> Other vestry minutes contain examples of surviving contracts with workhouse governors, most of which are basically very similar,

<sup>94</sup> SHC no records for the Ewell workhouse for 1834, '3831/1/2 Ewell vestry minutes 8 December 1816, 8 January 1817, 31 December 1818 and 17 October 1833'.

<sup>95</sup> SHC 3833/5/6, 'Long Ditton vestry minutes 11 April 1815 and 1 December 1816'.

<sup>96</sup> SHC 238/ES/9/3, 'Esher vestry minutes September 1815 and 4 January 1822'.

with a few local differences. In November 1814 Mr Bicker resigned from keeping the poor in and outside the workhouse at Byfleet, and the overseers of the parish took over the task. Later in 1831 the vestry appointed Henry Howard to run the poor house for 4s per head to include all “food, fuel, washing and mendings”<sup>97</sup> and the right to keep the earnings of inmates. In addition, the parish provided clothing, bedding and shoes for the inmates and paid for the one month’s keep of a pauper’s confinement and the midwife’s fee. When William Steer took over running the Horsell workhouse in 1824 he obtained 3s 9½ d weekly for each pauper out of which he had to provide all provisions, fuel, clothing, lodging and funeral fees. The parish took the responsibility for medical fees and Steer received in addition £2 for the lying in of every woman with an illegitimate child and allowed the earnings of the poor.<sup>98</sup> At Betchworth the vestry even allowed Richard Rose, the governor of the workhouse, “to go out to work occasionally when his attendance is not required in the house or garden.”<sup>99</sup>

### *Protection against inflation*

Many governors tried to protect themselves against rapid inflation. In 1819 Robert Vincent relinquished control of the Cobham workhouse as he was dissatisfied with the terms offered by the parish. Stephen Best took on its management at the cost of 4s per head for lodging, clothing and other costs, but with the proviso that when the cost of flour increased above 60s a sack he would receive an additional 3d per head every time the price of flour increased by 10s. At the same time, if flour reduced in price, a deduction was to be made in his allowance. In 1827 the parish increased Stephen Best’s allowance per pauper by 3d per week but the vestry stipulated that the parish would collect all the earnings of indoor paupers.<sup>100</sup> Stephen Best continued to complain that the allowance was insufficient to maintain the poor in the house and on his death in 1832 the parish let

<sup>97</sup> SHC PSH/BY/8/1, ‘Byfleet vestry minutes 11 April 1831’.

<sup>98</sup> SHC 2283/3/3, ‘Horsell vestry minutes (back of book) conditions on taking poor house 1824’.

<sup>99</sup> SHC P22/2/42, ‘Betchworth vestry minutes 18 November 1831’.

<sup>100</sup> SHC Box 6/1865/30, ‘Cobham vestry 11 August 1819 and 3 June 1827’.

the workhouse to Henry Stoward, who was prepared to accept the same terms of 4s per head.<sup>101</sup> In 1819 in Guildford there was a similar arrangement when William Baverstock took over the running of the workhouse in the parish of St Nicholas. He undertook to provide all provisions, clothing and medical assistance, except payments for broken bones. The parish was to provide bedding, burying the dead and the sum of £2 12s 6d for each case of bastard confinement, but to safeguard against inflation a scale of fees based on the price of bread was determined (see Table 5.17).

Table 5.17 *The price of bread scale used in the parish of St Nicholas Guildford October 1819*

Price Quarter Loaf	Weekly Allowance Per Pauper
9d	4s 10d
10d	5s 1d
11d	5s 3d
12d	5s 4d
13d	5s 6d
14d	5s 7d
15d	5s 9d
16d	5s 11d
17d	6s
18d	6s 2d

Source: SHC GUN/8/2, ST Nicholas Guildford Vestry Minutes 11 October 1819

This arrangement ran until 1822 when the parish renewed the contract. Even so, on this occasion the officials were not prepared to link the pauper allowance to the bread scale and paid a weekly allowance of 4s 6d for each pauper.<sup>102</sup> Similarly in 1818 Mr Stone proposed to the Dorking vestry that he would maintain the poor in the workhouse on a weekly basis of 4s 6d per head, basing this figure on the price of flour at 60s per sack. If the price of flour increased, he proposed an increase in the pauper allowance. The overseers, ever anxious to minimise their spending costs, decided they would purchase the flour for the workhouse and sell it to Mr Stone for 60s per sack regardless.<sup>103</sup> Not

<sup>101</sup> SHC Box 6/1865/30, 'Cobham vestry 13 March 1832'.

<sup>102</sup> SHC GUN/8/2, 'St Nicholas vestry minutes 11 October 1819 and 6 September 1822'.

<sup>103</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, 'Part I Dorking Vestry Minutes 9 February 1818'.

surprisingly governors of workhouses were often prepared to leave one parish to take up appointments nearby on more lucrative terms. When John Griffin left Esher in 1816 he became master of the Long Ditton workhouse where he received 4s 6d a week per head. For this sum he had to provide food, clothing and fuel. He also received an allowance of £2 for every woman delivered of a child in the house.<sup>104</sup>

### *Monitoring the workhouse*

The officers of local government oversaw the work of the governor or contractor but both local and magisterial checks on workhouse administration were sporadic and probably on the whole not very effective.<sup>105</sup> Not all parishes gave free rein to contractors any more than to workhouse governors. The parish vestrymen often set down rules but, in general, fewer checks were made on contractors than on workhouse governors. If contractors kept within budget, it appears that they were not required to produce yearly accounts for parish inspection. Eden commented that in the Farnham workhouse “the contractor says he keeps no account of expense or earnings” of the woollen manufacture.<sup>106</sup> Workhouse governors, on the other hand, often had to produce accounts for audit by the ratepayers and were bound by numerous rules. For example, the Bletchingley vestry produced a comprehensive, thirty-eight point rulebook for the administration of their workhouse (see Appendix 2). In 1832 the Cranleigh vestry set down very detailed instructions which Thomas Potter, governor of the workhouse, had to observe. For 3s per head per week he had to clothe and feed his charges “in a decent and proper manner” while the guardian could regularly inspect the inmates. The parish met other costs of maintaining the inmates, including forty shillings for each lying-in and 25s for each funeral. The parish doctor attended the sick indoor paupers and, in addition, the parish would make a wine

<sup>104</sup> SHC 3833/5/6, ‘Long Ditton vestry minutes 12 December 1817’.

<sup>105</sup> Taylor, ‘The unreformed’, p.69.

<sup>106</sup> Eden, *The state* 3, p.716.

allowance for sick paupers.<sup>107</sup> He could also use the ten acres of land attached to the workhouse and was “allowed to make the most he can of the labour of such paupers” to work the land.<sup>108</sup> There was always the fear of a corrupt workhouse governor who would defraud the parish of funds. To guard against this eventuality the parish of Lingfield insisted that the master record all bills for workhouse commodities, which would be paid monthly.<sup>109</sup> When the Epsom vestry received a written complaint that the governor of the workhouse was removing goods from the house, officers investigated the case. However, as nobody came forward, the master was acquitted of any misconduct.<sup>110</sup>

*Parish workhouses where select vestries operated*

In parishes where select vestries were established in 1819 (discussed in Chapter Three) there is evidence to show that they were determined to tighten the control of workhouse budgets and tried further to reduce poor relief costs. These vestries took an effective hand in monitoring the minutiae of workhouse administration. Wells has shown that in Sussex select vestries often tightened control by issuing new regulations and rules and this was also the case in Surrey.<sup>111</sup> In 1820 the Dorking select vestry became very concerned with the escalating cost of maintaining the large workhouse and terminated the contract with Stephen Stone. It took over the management of the workhouse by appointing a committee and a governor. They reviewed the workhouse accounts and produced monthly reports on expenditure. This arrangement proved a great success. In December 1820 the committee considered the new governor, Mr Beeching, to be most satisfactory “particularly as respect to the economy which is perceptible in the expenditure of the house,” lowering the cost of keeping a pauper there to 3s 4½d per

<sup>107</sup> SHC P58/1/1, ‘Cranleigh vestry minute book 13 March 1832’.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> SHC 2399/8/3, ‘Lingfield workhouse rules in the vestry minutes 1818’.

<sup>110</sup> SHC 3132/2/3, ‘Epsom vestry minutes 29 January 1821’.

<sup>111</sup> R. Wells, ‘Poor law reform in the rural south-east : the impact of the “Sturges Bourne Acts” during the agricultural depression 1815–1835’, *Southern History*, 23 (2001) 64.



week.<sup>112</sup> In 1825 the select vestry reported a reduction in costs over the previous year for maintenance of the poor in the workhouse (see Table 5.18). This was achieved by careful management and a fall in the numbers received into the house. In the year 1824–1825 the workhouse contained on average forty-four persons per month and in the previous year fifty-three persons per month.<sup>113</sup> The Dorking select vestry continued to manage carefully poor relief spending but workhouse expenditure did increase (see Table 5.18).

Table 5.18 *Dorking workhouse expenditure 1823–1834*

Year: April - March	Dorking Workhouse Expenditure
1823–1824	£694 13s 6d
1824–1825	£543 3s 6d
1825–1826	£1064 10s 6d
1826–1827	£663 6s 3d
1827–1828	£735 18s 8d
1828–1829	£596 13s 11d
1829–1830	£696 1s 1d
1830–1831	£656 15s 8d
1831–1832	£505 6s 5d
1832–1833	£900 9s 10d
1833–1834	£947 9s 5d

Source: SHC DOM/9/3 Part 2 and Part 3, Dorking Select Vestry Minutes

<sup>112</sup> SHC P65/1/1, 'Dorking select vestry 19 December 1820 and 3 January 1821'.

<sup>113</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, 'Part 2 Dorking Select vestry 25 March 1825'.

*Life in the workhouse*

As Oxley has observed, there are few complete records that document the living conditions in workhouses and in any case the quality of relief depended on the aims, efficiency and resources of the local administrators.<sup>114</sup> This is true of Surrey and it is only by collating the fragments of information from existing vestry minutes, government reports and Eden's county study that it is possible to build up a picture of life within the workhouse. The minutes of parish vestries for instance, indicate that time was taken to discuss the standard of food, clothing, bedding and the well-being of the inmates. As King has suggested for the Kettering workhouse, the pre-1834 workhouse regime in Surrey was one "of care rather than punishment."<sup>115</sup>

Eden believed the success in running a workhouse depended primarily on a governor or matron who would blend firmness with humanity in managing the house.<sup>116</sup> This is supported by Maclean who commented on the Dorking workhouse that "discipline is by no means sufficiently enforced owing to the absence of power on the part of the governor."<sup>117</sup> The rulebook for the Bletchingley workhouse made clear that the master or mistress was to "use all possible care to promote piety, peace and good order in the house and that they treat the elderly people calmly and tenderly."<sup>118</sup> It also insisted that "the master and mistress be sober and orderly themselves, not given to swear or lie and they see the orders are performed".<sup>119</sup> How far all these rules were adhered to is difficult to ascertain.

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<sup>114</sup> Oxley, *Poor Relief*, pp.79–101.

<sup>115</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.162.

<sup>116</sup> Eden, *The state* 3, p.695.

<sup>117</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p. 529A.

<sup>118</sup> SHC 1/48/80, 'Vestry minutes rules of the Bletchingley workhouse No 33 October 1816'.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, A copy of workhouse rules.

*Workhouse buildings*

Before 1834 there was no standard design for the “model” workhouse. The size and appearance of workhouses was extremely varied; many were converted farmhouses or cottages and some of these can still be located. The Shere workhouse, built in the late 1720s to accommodate twenty paupers, survives today as two cottages. For many workhouses the surviving buildings or plans for workhouses can give some indication of their design. For the construction of the Albury workhouse, built in 1732, detailed accounts of bills paid for its construction exist. It was built for the cost of £339 and designed to house twelve paupers.<sup>120</sup> Some workhouse buildings also survived if they were large enough to be taken over by the new unions. Others, as in Hambledon, were pulled down and the newly formed Poor Law Union built the new workhouse on the site of the old one.

Workhouse inventories found in overseers’ accounts provide lists of the contents and, if tabulated room by room, give some indication of living arrangements. These are extremely useful and have been used by historians to reconstruct the environment the parish authorities provided for their poor.<sup>121</sup> The inventory for Egham is particularly informative as it details the inmates’ living quarters (see Appendix 3).<sup>122</sup> It appears from other inventories (see Appendixes 4–7) that most of Surrey’s workhouses were well equipped, though some items were worn or in need of repair.<sup>123</sup> For example, one bedroom in the Egham workhouse contained “a stump wants repair; sacking wants repair and a flock bolster bad.” The bedroom nonetheless had also been equipped with two new blankets and one pair of new sheets.<sup>124</sup> A comparison of the inventory of William Paice’s cottage in Godstone with the Godstone workhouse indicates that there was no great

<sup>120</sup> SHC 3624/3/1 ‘Entries for the year 1732, Albury Overseers Accounts’.

<sup>121</sup> Digby, *Pauper*, and Longmate, *The workhouse*, and Oxley, *Poor relief*, also Taylor, ‘The unreformed.’

<sup>122</sup> SHC 2516/2/11, ‘Egham Inventory’.

<sup>123</sup> SHC P1/7/5, ‘27271/48/96 Bletchingley inventory, P25/4/281 Godstone inventory, 2399/8/4 Lingfield inventory, 2589/8/2 Oxted inventory, P60/3/6 Walton-on-Thames inventory’.

<sup>124</sup> SHC 2516/2/11, ‘Egham vestry poor house inventory 8–11 August 1832’.

disparity between what was provided in the workhouse and the cottage furnishings shown in (see Appendixes 7 and 8).

For many, living conditions within the workhouse conferred a better standard of living than that of the independent labourer. On his journey through Surrey Arthur Young described a hovel he visited in Worplesdon as being dug out of the hill. It consisted of a small room with an earth floor and a bed with “one blanket, one bit of sheet and a rag or two.”<sup>125</sup> In Farnham he wrote of a hovel “open to the weather on one side; no bedstead, only straw and some rags on the ground.”<sup>126</sup> It is also evident that the parish overseers kept the state of the workhouse under review. The Esher workhouse made improvements to the workhouse in 1832. These included the replacement of the old beds with iron bedsteads, “new beds, blankets and coverlids,” repairs to the workhouse and new windows for “the better admission of air beneficial to the health and comfort of the poor”<sup>127</sup>

### *Workhouse clothing*

Some workhouse inventories mention clothing. The Egham inventory includes a comprehensive list of the inmates’ own clothing (see Appendix 3) For example, Richard Wellbelove owned “a worn out pair of stockings, a worn out great coat, a worn out pair of trousers, a tidy pair of breeches, a worn out waistcoat, two waistcoats wants[sic] washing and mending, a pair of new shoes, a pair of good worsted stockings, a pair of working breeches bad, old looking waistcoat bad, two neck cloths bad, an old hat bad and two shirts.”<sup>128</sup> It appears in Egham that inmates wore their own clothes and it is not clear what clothing the Egham workhouse provided for inmates. At Bletchingley a detailed inventory of the clothing given to the inmates indicates that in 1824 the twelve men in the

<sup>125</sup> A. Young, *‘An inquiry into the propriety of applying wastes to the better maintenance and support of the poor with instances of the great effects which have attended their acquisition of property in keeping them from the parish even in the present scarcity’* (Bury: J. Rackham Angel Hill, 1801), p.85.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p.101.

<sup>127</sup> SHC 238/ES/9/3, ‘Esher vestry minutes 9 August 1832’.

<sup>128</sup> SHC2516/2/11, ‘Egham poor house inventory 8–11 August 1832’.

workhouse received “two round frocks, one jacket, two changes, one pair of breeches, two pairs of stockings, one pair of shoes and one hat. The ten women obtained “two gowns, one pair stays, one upper coat, one under coat; two changes, two pairs of stockings, one pair of shoes, one bonnet, two aprons and two handkerchiefs” (see Appendix 6).<sup>129</sup> In 1823 officials listed and costed the clothes taken out by paupers “by consent” or “run away “ from the poor house at Farnham, revealing how well equipped these people were. For example table 5.19 reveals the clothing worn by the Messer family who left the workhouse by consent in April 1823.

Table 5.19 *Workhouse clothing for three Farnham inmates for 1823*

William Messer	Shirt, Smock Frock: 5s 6d Jacket and Trousers: 3s 6d
Suzanna Messer	3 Frocks, 4 Petticoats, 2 Shifts, 1 pair shoes, 2 pairs of stockings, bonnet: 14s
Doben Messer	3 Frocks, 4 Petticoats, 2 Shifts, 1 pair shoes, 2 pairs of stockings

Source: SHC FP1/3/2, Box 64 Farnham Parish Accounts April 1823

Not all of the clothing provided was new because the inventory noted new items given to paupers. For example, William Smither who ran away had been given two shirts, two pairs of stockings, one jacket, a waistcoat, one *new* smock frock, a good pair of shoes and hat, the total costing 19s 9d.<sup>130</sup> From the surviving records it does appear inmates in the workhouse were adequately clothed.

<sup>129</sup> SHC 27271/48/96, 'Clothing list Bletchingley workhouse 1824'.

<sup>130</sup> SHC FP1/3/2, 'Box 64 Farnham Parish Accounts April 1823–April 1824'.

*Daily Routine*

The most common surviving records are those concerned with the daily routine, in the form of sets of rules that inmates had to obey. As life in the workhouse was carefully regulated, many of these rulebooks are very similar as they stressed the need for an orderly routine. The Lingfield workhouse produced a list of orders and rules, (see Appendix 7). At the Egham workhouse the master read the rules every Sunday so all inmates were conversant with them. Workhouse rulebooks are very informative but, naturally, do not indicate how strictly rules were enforced.

Timekeeping in summer and in winter differed to minimise expenditure on light and heat and to make full use of daylight working hours. At Egham workhouse everyone was to rise by six o'clock in the summer and seven o'clock in winter, unless prevented by sickness. Bedtime was nine o'clock in summer and eight o'clock in winter, and all children under fourteen were to go to bed an hour earlier "except those who may be out at work." It was usual for all meals to be taken together, except for those who were too sick to attend. In the Egham workhouse breakfast was at nine in winter and eight in summer, dinner at one o'clock and supper seven o'clock.

Generally, rules stressed the need for personal hygiene and the cleanliness of the house.<sup>131</sup> The Bletchingley workhouse committee insisted that at meals all inmates "sit in a decent manner with hands and face washed, hair combed and clothes brushed."<sup>132</sup> The Egham workhouse was to be swept every day and the floors washed twice a week. The windows were to be opened every day and the "rooms fumigated" as required.<sup>133</sup> The fear of the outbreak of disease was always a threat with inhabitants living in close proximity.

<sup>131</sup> Oxley, *Poor Relief*, p.93.

<sup>132</sup> SHC 1/48/80, 'Bletchingley vestry minutes a copy of workhouse rules October 1816'.

<sup>133</sup> SHC ACC 14983/2, 'Egham vestry minutes Book 2 October '.

Efforts were made by the parishes to keep the workhouses clean, and entries for soaps, whitewash, medicines, inoculations and stipulations in doctors' contracts that they were to care for the poor in the workhouse illustrates the efforts that parishes made to maintain the health of pauper inmates. Parishes were anxious to maintain healthy workhouse populations. This was often difficult as the young and old were in "close proximity" and "mortality from communicable diseases" was always present.<sup>134</sup>

### *Religious observance*

In Surrey workhouses, as in other counties, religious observance was very important; prayers were said usually every morning and evening and before meals, when all inmates had to attend.<sup>135</sup> In the Egham workhouse absentees were reported to the weekly workhouse committee for talking at prayers or during mealtimes. It is interesting to note that Reverend Douglas presented twelve testaments and twelve pairs of spectacles for the use of the poor in the Epsom workhouse.<sup>136</sup> Sunday was the one day when the regular routine was broken and inmates attended church. This was compulsory and only the sick were excused. According to Taylor, church attendance was important because it provided parishioners with an estimate of the number of inmates and "ensured inmates of many houses a weekly cleaning and a decent suit of clothes."<sup>137</sup> It was also seen as important that the virtues of sobriety and industry should be preached to workhouse inmates. The rules of the Frimley workhouse made it the responsibility of the master that all inmates attending church were clean and "neat as circumstances will allow."<sup>138</sup> Horsell parish provided two suits of clothing for inmates of the workhouse, one for work and one for them to "appear decently at divine service on Sabbath days " twice in summer and

<sup>134</sup> Taylor, 'The unreformed', p.71.

<sup>135</sup> Oxley, *Poor relief*, p.93.

<sup>136</sup> SHC 3132/2/2, 'Epsom Vestry Minutes 18 December 1818'.

<sup>137</sup> Taylor, 'The unreformed', p.71.

<sup>138</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley vestry minutes 13 June 1822'.

once in winter.<sup>139</sup> In 1820 the inmates of the Cranleigh workhouse had to sit in the pew that had been used by Miss Potter's School and the master of the workhouse had to check that inmates attending church were clean and had a decent suit of clothing.<sup>140</sup> In the parish of Egham inmates of the workhouse were escorted to church by the governor and all had to return promptly to the workhouse after the service.<sup>141</sup> Apart from regular attendance at church, the inmates of the Bletchingley workhouse sang psalms and heard lessons before morning and evening service.<sup>142</sup>

### *Discipline*

Workhouse rule books set down a disciplined regime for workhouse inmates but, as Eastwood has noted, "the calculated harshness of this regime was not always achieved in practice but few could doubt the vestry's intention" to control the poor.<sup>143</sup> These records do contain a great deal of information on the system of management adopted by each workhouse but inevitably they do not reflect the experiences of the paupers in the institution. However "they do indicate what vestrymen expected workhouse life to be like."<sup>144</sup>

In the Egham workhouse no inmate was allowed to drink or smoke tobacco unless "by advice of the apothecary". Inmates caught lying, swearing or cursing had to stand on a stool in the dining room at dinner time and had the committed crime pinned to his or her's chest and he or she was further punished by having only bread and water for that day. Any person caught stealing or disobeying any of the house rules was punished by either a "distinction of dress or by being kept on bread and water." If a second offence were reported, they were taken before a Justice of the Peace to be punished. For example in

<sup>139</sup> SHC 2283/3/3, 'Horsell vestry minutes (back of the book) 1824'.

<sup>140</sup> SHC P58/1/1, 'Cranleigh Vestry minutes 8 November 1820'.

<sup>141</sup> SHC ACC 1498/1, 'Egham Vestry minutes 4 December 1825'.

<sup>142</sup> SHC 1/48/80, 'Bletchingley Vestry minutes a copy of workhouse rules October 1816'.

<sup>143</sup> Eastwood, *Governing*, p. 169.

<sup>144</sup> Hitchcock, (D.Phil thesis), p.175.



1823 Mrs Cooper, the then mistress of the Egham workhouse, reported Stephen Portsmouth and Elizabeth Marks for fighting and swearing in the workhouse, and as a result the magistrate sent them to the Guildford gaol for twenty-one days' hard labour.<sup>145</sup> Mrs Saunders, the mistress of the Frimley workhouse, complained on several occasions to the vestry of the quarrelsome and violent conduct of Samuel Moth. It transpired on investigation that he had been asked on several occasions to leave the workhouse but had refused. Now the vestry decided to eject him but was prepared to keep his wife.<sup>146</sup> Four years later the Frimley vestry received many complaints from the master of the workhouse concerning the behaviour of two young girls, Mary and Elizabeth Cheesman, who refused to work and used abusive and threatening language. It was also reported that Elizabeth Cheesman had spent nights outside the workhouse and so they were taken before a magistrate on several occasions and reprimanded.<sup>147</sup> The rulebook of the Bletchingley workhouse set down that those refusing to work would be punished by having meals withdrawn or be given corporal punishment.<sup>148</sup>

### *The workhouse diet*

There is also information available on the diet provided for workhouse inmates and Eden produced numerous dietaries. Oxley has noted the regional variations, as, for example, the frequent use of potatoes in many northern parishes and the "prominent place given to bread and cheese in the south."<sup>149</sup> The amount of food given and the quality is a matter for speculation, and contractors and the parishes were naturally anxious to keep costs at a minimum. Of all aspects of the pre-1834 workhouse, the diet received least criticism, Majendie commenting that in his opinion inmates of most workhouses, especially those in

<sup>145</sup> SHC 2516/5/4, 'Egham vestry minutes book 2 February 1823'.

<sup>146</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, 'Frimley vestry minutes 26 February 1822'.

<sup>147</sup> SHC 25893/1, 'Frimley vestry minutes 4 April 1826, 31 October 1826 and 9 January 1827'.

<sup>148</sup> SHC 1/48/80, 'Bletchingley vestry minutes a copy of workhouse rules October 1816'.

<sup>149</sup> Oxley, *Poor relief*, p.96.

country parishes, lived much better than labourers and small ratepayers.<sup>150</sup> He noted that in the workhouses he visited meat dinners were served between four and seven times a week and that seems regular practice.<sup>151</sup> Compared to Eden's report of 1792, the menus were very similar to those served in the workhouses Majendie visited.<sup>152</sup> The parish of St Nicholas, on appointing William Baverstock to run the workhouse, set down the bill of fare that he was to provide which included five meat meals (see Table 5.20).<sup>153</sup>

Table 5.20 *Thames Ditton workhouse diet in 1786*

	Breakfast	Dinner	Supper
Sunday	Gruel	Meat	Broth
Monday	Broth	Hot Pudding	Bread and Cheese
Tuesday	Broth	Meat	Broth
Wednesday	Broth	Hot Pudding	Cold Meat Bread and Cheese
Thursday	Broth	Meat	Broth
Friday	Broth	Hot Pudding	Bread and Cheese
Saturday	Broth	Meat	Bread and Cheese
Sunday	Gruel	Meat	Broth

Source: SHC 2568/9/3, 1786 Thames Ditton Bill of Fare

It is interesting to note the bill of fare for the Thames Ditton workhouse for 1786 resembles the Guildford one used over thirty years later table 5.21.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 165A .

<sup>151</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean, Godalming 4 meat dinners per week p.529A and Witley 6 meat dinners p.529A, also Chobham 7 meat dinners p. 530A .

<sup>152</sup> Eden , *The state 3*, workhouse diets Epsom, Esher, Farnham and Reigate pp. 697–722 .

<sup>153</sup> SHC GUN/8/2, 'St Nicholas vestry minutes 11 October 1819'.

<sup>154</sup> SHC 2568/9/3, 'Thames Ditton Bill of Fare 1786'.

Table 5.21 *Guildford workhouse diet in 1819*

	Breakfast	Dinner	Afternoon	Supper
Sunday	Bread Butter Or Cheese And Pint Of Beer	Bread Mutton With Roots Or Greens If In Season Or Peas Pudding And Pint Of Beer		Bread Butter Or Cheese and Pint Of Beer
Monday	Bread And Broth	Bread and Mutton And Pint of Beer		Bread Butter Or Cheese and Pint Of Beer
Tuesday	Bread and Milk Pottage	Bread Beef With Roots Or Greens If In Season Or Peas Pudding And Pint Of Beer		Bread Butter Or Cheese and Pint Of Beer
Wednesday	Bread And Broth	Bread And Cold Meat	Half Pint Of Beer	Bread butter Or Cheese And Pint Of Beer
Thursday	Bread And Broth	Bread Beef With Roots Or Greens If In Season Or Peas Pudding And Pint Of Beer		Bread Butter Or Cheese and Pint Of Beer
Friday	Bread And Milk	Bread And Cold Meat	Half Pint Of Beer	Bread Butter Or Cheese And Pint Of Beer
Saturday	Bread And Milk Pottage	Bread and Mutton And Pint Of Beer		Bread Butter Or Cheese and Pint Of Beer

Source: SHC GUN/8/2, The Guildford Workhouse Bill of Fare 1819.

It appears that workhouse diets were more generous than those which independent labourers could afford, as meat appeared regularly on the menu. Indeed, Majendie commented that the diet of the Godstone workhouse was superior to that of local labourers. He also noted that William Freemantle from Clapham, boarded in the Reigate Union workhouse, was “extremely well fed with a feather bed ...and a diet superior to that of the industrious labourer.”<sup>155</sup> The replies to the Rural Queries indicate that a family could survive on bread, cheese, bacon and “meat occasionally”<sup>156</sup> on a weekly wage of 12s but, as the reply from the parish of Haslemere points out, this was dependent on a labourer being in constant employment. Unfortunately, in agricultural parishes winter unemployment was common. It is also interesting to note the regular provision of special

<sup>155</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 173A.

<sup>156</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX, Reply to Question 14 Buckland p.476b.

foods, wine and port for the sick, and the supplying of little extras, usually tobacco for the elderly men and tea and sugar for the elderly women.

### *Suppliers*

Providing provisions for the workhouse was a contract much in demand by local shopkeepers. It was often put out to tender as the parish vestries were determined to obtain the most competitive prices for supplies and wanted to stop any profiteering by the suppliers or workhouse governors. As Hitchcock has observed, supplying goods to the workhouse provided “a golden opportunity for outright corruption.”<sup>157</sup> Therefore, careful monitoring and a system of rotation had the advantage of preventing any one supplier from gaining a monopoly for any extended period of time. To try to stop profiteering the Bletchingley workhouse set down that if the overseer for the year was a shopkeeper he was unable to supply the workhouse for that year.<sup>158</sup> In December 1815 the Dorking vestry invited sealed bids to provide the workhouse with provisions and clothing and in May 1819 the Bletchingley vestry asked local shopkeepers to place their tenders in sealed bids to provide the workhouse with cheese, butter, soap, sugar, tea and salt for the ensuing month.<sup>159</sup> The Godstone vestry set down terms by which Mr Thomas Rose was to supply the workhouse but this was carefully monitored and renewed on a three months basis.<sup>160</sup> The Bletchingley vestry insisted that suppliers were only given a monthly or quarterly contract and, if the goods supplied were not acceptable, the contract would cease. For example, if the butcher did not supply meat “as the directors shall think most profitable “ the contract would go to “other shops in this parish where they may be best furnished.”<sup>161</sup> Throughout the 1820s as poor rates rose, parish vestries struggled to keep

<sup>157</sup> Hitchcock, (D.Phil thesis), p.137.

<sup>158</sup> SHC 1/48/80, 'Bletchingley vestry minutes copy rule book for the workhouse October 1816'.

<sup>159</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, 'Part I Dorking vestry minutes 15 December 1815, and P20/6/7, Bletchingley vestry minutes May 1819'.

<sup>160</sup> SHC P25/3/2, 'Godstone vestry minutes 5 January 1831'.

<sup>161</sup> SHC 1/48/80, 'Bletchingley vestry minutes copy rule book for the workhouse October 1816'.

costs down and were prepared to frequently change suppliers to receive the most competitive price for provisions.

### *Criticism of the workhouse system*

In their general comments the Poor Law commissioners expressed considerable criticism of the unreformed workhouse, which they found to be inefficient in administration and lax in discipline. In their report of 1834 they described the workhouse as “a large almshouse in which the young are trained in idleness, ignorance and vice; the able-bodied maintained in sluggish sensual indolence; the aged and more respectable exposed to misery.”<sup>162</sup> The Commissioners described two types of workhouses. The first, and common to rural Surrey, was the unregulated poorhouse with a mixture of paupers, which the commissioners commented were in a state of filth, oppression and debauchery. The Commissioners viewed the second group, the larger workhouses in cities as depots for immigrants and vagrants that attracted prostitutes and criminals.<sup>163</sup> They also wanted to see the introduction of the reformed workhouse, which influenced their whole evaluation of the unreformed workhouse. They recommended a more unified system of poor relief and saw the workhouse as the key to a new system of poor relief, one supervised by a central body and run by a staff of professional officers.

Nonetheless, the two poor law commissioners for Surrey were not so damning in their comments on the workhouses they visited. In fact, they were surprisingly complimentary, although Majendie wished inmates could be separated “so as to afford some additional comforts to the sick and aged, and instruction to the children” and at the same time to

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<sup>162</sup> Report of Royal Commission for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws XXVII 1834, p.31.

<sup>163</sup> S.G. Checkland and O.A. Checkland (eds), *The Poor Law Report* (London, Pelican, 1974), pp.124–27 .

restrain the idle.<sup>164</sup> He did recognise that it was impracticable in small workhouses. Majendie criticised the governor of the Reigate Union workhouse who was paid a salary of £40 per annum but “has no interest in the maintenance or work of the paupers.”<sup>165</sup> Maclean reported in detail on twelve Surrey workhouses and, again, there were few criticisms.<sup>166</sup> He did comment that at the Dorking workhouse “discipline is by no means sufficiently enforced, owing to the absence of power on the part of the governor.” At Witley he noted that “the master has no means of separating those of good from those of bad character,” while at Egham he criticised the fact that “there is no place of confinement in case of misconduct or disobedience.”<sup>167</sup> Segregation of inmates was seen as imperative to impose an ordered regime and to keep the young away from dissolute characters. It is interesting to note this was the only point of general agreement between the 1834 report and the evidence collected by the Surrey commissioners.<sup>168</sup>

Some pamphleteers at the time were also very critical of the unreformed workhouse. For example, Brereton commented they have “spread a most pestilential infection among the peasantry” and “it is clear that these systems have been as wasteful as they have been unsuccessful and immoral.”<sup>169</sup> On the other hand in his report in 1835, W. Mott, Poor Law Commissioner for Surrey, was very critical of the administration of the old poor laws, but of the workhouses he visited he made no criticisms.<sup>170</sup> For rural Surrey I have only unearthed two records in vestry minutes that criticised the state of the local workhouse but there may well have been others that have not survived. In 1823 the Epsom magistrates reported that they were forced to act after several “respectable inhabitants” of the parish

<sup>164</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie 165A .

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172A .

<sup>166</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean Surrey workhouses examined Ockley; Kingston; Guildford; Godalming; Witley; Dorking; Farnham; Epsom; Mitcham; Chobham; Chertsey; Egham; pp 528–30A .

<sup>167</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean pp. 529A–30A .

<sup>168</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie pp.165A–175A and C. H. Maclean pp. 528A–30A.

<sup>169</sup> C.D. Brereton, *An inquiry into the workhouse system and the law of maintenance in agricultural districts* (Norwich, Burks and Kinnebrook, 1825) pp. 120 and 123.

<sup>170</sup> Report of the Poor Law Commissioners XXIX Appendix B 1835 Report for Surrey W. Mott No 8 pp. 305–371 MH32/56 Commissioner for Surrey Report 29 September.

had complained about the dilapidated state of the workhouse, which was unfit for the maintenance of the poor. The magistrates ordered the overseers to repair the house and provide more fuel and bedding for the inmates and recommended that the parish provide a new workhouse. As a result, the parish vestry decided to build a new workhouse to accommodate fifty persons.<sup>171</sup> The other example is a letter from a Mr Steele of Walton complaining that the old people in the workhouse were starving and “they have taken off all their allowance of beer and do not give them half enough to eat.”<sup>172</sup> There are also examples of people refusing to enter the workhouse; Elizabeth Biggs was unable to look after herself and so applied for some additional assistance from the overseers and was offered a place in the Egham workhouse. The vestry minutes record that she had refused, stating, “she would rather starve than go into the house.”<sup>173</sup> As Taylor observes, for most people “the workhouse failed to be a palatable form of relief for most of the poor.”<sup>174</sup>

Forty years ago historians were very critical about the state of the workhouses. The Webbs described “the overcrowding, insanitation, filth and gross indecency of workhouse life during the whole of the eighteenth and even the first thirty or forty years of the nineteenth century are simply indescribable.”<sup>175</sup> Marshall also condemned the eighteenth century workhouse, which “with its promise of stench and starvation was used to reduce the rates,” and concedes that although the commissioners exaggerated the horrors of the unregulated workhouse system and favoured the virtues of the “deterrent workhouse,” she did find examples of unsanitary, poorly run workhouses.<sup>176</sup> More recently, Blaug described the workhouses as “invariably an unsanitary and disorderly institution, herding together the young, the old, the sick and the insane,” and George Body concluded that the workhouses

<sup>171</sup> SHC 2516/5/4, ‘Egham vestry minutes 24 January 1823 and 31 January 1823’.

<sup>172</sup> SHC 302/4, ‘Letter from Mr J Steele Walton to Mr Faulkner Hersham c1830’.

<sup>173</sup> SHC ACC1498/1, ‘Egham vestry minutes 6 November 1825’.

<sup>174</sup> Taylor, ‘The unreformed’, p. 72.

<sup>175</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law 1 part 11*, p.68.

<sup>176</sup> D. Marshall, *The English poor in the eighteenth century* (London, Routledge and Sons, 1926), p.160, M.A. Crowther, *The workhouse system 1834–1929. The history of an English social institution* (London, Methuen, 1981), p.24, and Marshall, *The English poor*, (example Bristol), p.138.

in Dorset were “seldom well run and most of them experienced frequent changes of management.”<sup>177</sup> In rural Surrey many of the workhouses did see a regular change of administration but parishes spent a great deal of time and money on the care of the workhouse inmates. This does not mean that the standards within the house were of a high standard and there are signs of deprivation but I agree with Taylor that “the unreformed workhouse for all its inadequacies fulfilled a social need.”<sup>178</sup>

### *Conclusion*

By 1834 the commissioners perceived that the workhouse had failed to provide moral, social and economic control and, in consequence, they were filled with the undeserving indolent poor. The Poor Law Commissioners criticised the unreformed workhouse as inefficient in administration and lax in discipline.<sup>179</sup> The commissioner, George Nicholls, described them as “pest-houses where disease social, moral and physical were generated and nurtured and whence spread into and contaminated the surrounding districts.”<sup>180</sup> In fact, as has been shown in this chapter, in reality the workhouses cared mostly for children, the elderly, sick, insane and unmarried mothers at the time of their confinement. The workhouse population was in Surrey, as in the rest of southern England, generally small.<sup>181</sup> Local records contain evidence to suggest that life within the workhouse was not always as grim as has been suggested. The records for the Surrey workhouses support the view they were “relatively flexible and humane institutions.”<sup>182</sup> As Taylor pointed out, the commissioners’ great concern to reduce pauperism by introducing a workhouse test

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<sup>177</sup> M. Blaug, (1963) ‘The myth of the old poor law and the making of the new’ *The Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963) 157, and G. Body, (1964) ‘*The administration of the Poor Law in Dorset 1760–1834*’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton 1964), p.186.

<sup>178</sup> Taylor, ‘The Unreformed’, p.74.

<sup>179</sup> Report of Royal Commission for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws XXVII 1834 p.156.

<sup>180</sup> G. Nicholls, *History of English poor law* (London, P.S. King, 1898), p.101.

<sup>181</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 164.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, and Digby, *Pauper*, p.46.



for the able-bodied influenced their evaluation of the old workhouse system.<sup>183</sup> In fact, for Surrey, the commissioners' only criticism of the workhouses was that there was a need for the greater classification of inmates. From my research I agree with Taylor that "the unreformed workhouse for all its inadequacies fulfilled a social need" and provided shelter for the vulnerable.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Taylor, 'The Unreformed', p.72.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

## Chapter Six

### Ratepayers And The Administration Of Parish Poor Relief

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Parish poor relief was funded by a local tax on value from property, primarily on land and buildings. Central government provided the framework within which local communities looked after their poor, but parishes always guarded their independence because it guaranteed them a degree of political influence and safeguarded the powers of ratepayers over public expenditure. Control was important because “if a parish was generous or prodigal its own ratepayers footed the bill.”<sup>1</sup> The financing of poor relief and the relationship between the ratepayers and the poor of the parish are important areas of research that must be considered from the local and national perspective in any study of poverty and the administration of poor law before 1834. Solar believes the rating system offered “considerable uniformity in organisation and benefits” and was administered largely according to local needs and preferences.<sup>2</sup> A fundamental issue for overseers was balancing the extent of pauperisation in the parish against the amount of money ratepayers were prepared to pay.<sup>3</sup> As the numbers needing help rose during the course of the 1820s it is possible to identify tensions between the ability of the ratepayers to pay rates and the scale of allowances provided. A key issue but one that has not been well researched, this is the theme that will be addressed in this chapter.

#### *The Administration of poor relief*

The 1601 Act stated that occupiers of property within the parish should be taxed according to their ability to pay and there evidence at the time that some parishes did try

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<sup>1</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing rural England tradition and transformation in local government 1780–1840* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> P. Solar, ‘Poor relief and English economic development before the industrial revolution’ *Economic History Review*, 48 (1995) 5.

<sup>3</sup> S. Hindle, *On the parish the micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c. 1550–1750* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 283.

to rate according to assets.<sup>4</sup> As it was not a precise assessment, increasingly, parishes chose to use the rental value of property as the basis for the assessment. Each parish then levied a variable poor rate on the assessed rental value of the local property, generating the income that was subsequently used as the means to relieve the parish poor. However, the parish only assessed the occupier. Every parish also decided its own rating bands for land and property. Table 6.1 indicates the variation in six Surrey parishes.

Table 6.1 *Surrey rating*

Parish	Rating 1832–1833	Valuation On Land	Valuation On Property
Chiddingfold	24s In £	2/3 Of Value	1/2 Value
Shere	17s In £	Full Value	1/3 Value
Cranleigh	18s 6d In £	2/3 Of Value	2/3 Value
Guildford	9s In £	Not Stated	2/3 Value
Farnham	8s In £	4/5 Of Value	2/3 Value
Godalming	14s In £	1/2 Of Value	1/3 Value

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. Maclean pp. 567A–8A

Day-to-day administration of parish affairs remained formally under the control of the vestry and its officials. Within each parish the vestry appointed officers to administer poor relief subject to the general supervision of the ratepayers assembled in regularly held vestry meetings. Parochial general vestry meetings were open forums that all ratepayers could attend to hear policy and discuss relief cases.<sup>5</sup>

Usually, the ratepayers assembled at Easter to elect the parish officials and set the rate payable by each occupier towards the support of the poor. Notice of the new rate had to be given in advance. On 27<sup>th</sup> October 1825, for example, the Bletchingley vestry set the poor rate, having had it read out in the church service on the two preceding Sundays.

The new rate was then displayed on the church door to acquaint all ratepayers of the

<sup>4</sup> 39 Elizabeth c.5 and 43 Elizabeth c.2.

<sup>5</sup> D. Marshall, *The English poor in the eighteenth century: A study in social and administrative history* (London, Methuen reprint 1965), p.64.

rate.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter the rate went before two justices of the peace for approval: they had to sign the assessment book every time a parish raised a new rate. It was usual practice for the new rate to cover the ensuing six months, but some parishes preferred to raise more than two rates per year, allowing them to spread the burden of rate payments over the whole period. In times of increasing demands on poor relief, parishes often had to introduce additional ratings during the year. Hindle, in his research, has identified “micro-politics at play in the assessment and disbursement of parish relief”<sup>7</sup> and this practice can be identified in rural Surrey. In March 1819 the Esher vestry set the rate at 2s 6d in the pound, but in the following month it set a further rate of 6d in the pound to pay all the unpaid bills that the late overseer produced.<sup>8</sup> The Godalming vestry normally had four ratings per financial year but had to increase them to five in the years 1832–1833 and 1833–1834 to enable the parish to meet rising relief costs (see Table 6.2).

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<sup>6</sup> SHC P20/5/2, ‘Betchingley Vestry Minutes 27 October 1825’.

<sup>7</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p. 360.

<sup>8</sup> SHC 2383/9/6 Esher Vestry Minutes 25th March 1819 and 12<sup>th</sup> April 1819.

Table 6.2 *Godalming poor rate 1815–1834*

Year	1 <sup>st</sup> Rate	2 <sup>nd</sup> Rate	3 <sup>rd</sup> Rate	4th Rate	5 <sup>th</sup> Rate	Total Rate For Year
1815–1816	April 5s In £	October 5s In £	February 2s 6d In £	-	-	12s 6d
1816–1817	May 2s 6d In £	July 2s 6d In £	November 3s In £	February 5s In £	-	13s
1817–1818	April 4s 6d In £	July 5s In £	October 5s In £	January 5s In £	-	19s 6d
1818–1819	April 4s In £	July 3s 6d In £	October 3s 6d In £	January 4s In £	-	15s
1819–1820	April 3s 6d In £	July 3s In £	October 3s 6d In £	January 4s In £	-	14s
1820–1821	April 3s 6d In £	July 3s 6d In £	October 3s 6d In £	January 4s 6d In £	-	15s
1821–1822	April 3s 6d In £	July 2s 6d In £	October 3s In £	January 3s 6d In £	-	12s 6d
1822–1823	April 3s In £	July 2s 6d In £	October 3s In £	January 2s 6d In £	-	11s
1823–1824	April 2s In £	July 3s In £	October 3s In £	January 3s In £	-	11s
1824–1825	April 2s 6d In £	July 2s 6d In £	October 2s 6d In £	January 3s In £	-	10s 6d
1825–1826	April 2s 6d In £	July 3s In £	October 2s 6d In £	January 2s In £		10s
1826–1827	April 2s 6d In £	July 3s In £	October 2s In £	January 3s In £		10s 6d
1827–1828	April 2s 6d In £	July 3s In £	October 2s 6d In £	January 3s 6d In £	-	11s
1828–1829	April 2s 6d In £	July 3s In £	October 3s In £	January 3s 6d In £	-	12s
1829–1830	April 3s In £	July 3s In £	October 3s In £	January 4s In £	-	13s
1830–1831	April 3s 6d In £	July 3s In £	November 3s In £	February 4s 6d In £	-	14s
1831–1832	April 3s In £	July 2s 6d In £	October 4s In £	January 4s In £	-	13s 6d
1832–1833	April 3s 6d In £	July 3s 6d In £	October 4s 6d In £	November 1s In £	January 4s 6d In £	17s
1833–1834	March 1s 8d In £	April 3s In £	July 3s In £	October In 3s In £	December 2s 6d In £	13s 4d

Source: SHC Godalming Poor Rate Books, 2253/10/3; 2253/10/5; 2253/10/6; 2253/10/7; 2253/10/8; 2253/10/9; 2253/10/10; 2253/10/11

### *Ratepayers and the parish poor*

Historians differ in their opinion of the perceived role of the vestry in making provision for relief within the parish. As parishes had the “power to define poverty as it wished,”<sup>9</sup> the result was a wide diversity of poor law practice. The Webbs suggested that cost and the

<sup>9</sup> S. King, ‘Poor relief and English economic development re-appraised’, *Economic History Review*, 50 (1997) 362.

need to control welfare provision, rather than any perceived duty of care to the poor, drove poor law provision at this level. More recently, historians have tended to take a more optimistic view, recognising that the poor and the ratepayers shared the same “basic social unity of values and purpose” and that there did exist “a broad identity between ratepayers and recipients of relief.”<sup>10</sup> Even in comparing parishes with similar socio-economic structures, there were variations in the number of poor relieved and the scale of relief.<sup>11</sup> King believes that the administration of the “poor law constituted a meeting point for the poor and elites rather than a forum for conflict.”<sup>12</sup> Hollen Lees views the granting of welfare provision as “a reinforcement of social solidarity on the communal level”<sup>13</sup> and Taylor and Snell hold an optimistic view of the old poor law in providing provision for the poor.<sup>14</sup> Of course, this does not mean there were no disagreements at vestry level. One area of potential conflict was the perception of poor relief, from the point of view of the ratepayer and the poor of the parish respectively. Marshall identified the essence of the old poor law as “the poor sort took relief as their right while ratepayers despised them for their indolence insolence and even for their very misery.”<sup>15</sup> Eastwood sees the old poor law as the pauper’s right to relief and the landowner’s right to rent as the “central mediating institution in rural society.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time, legally no-one was eligible for relief as a right, although parish overseers accepted that the sick and the old had to be cared for. This did not mean that there was no process of constant negotiation between what parish ratepayers were prepared to pay in relief payments and the paupers’ expectations of relief. For example, in 1818 the Frimley vestry ratepayers complained that

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<sup>10</sup> R. Mitchison, *Coping with destitution: poverty and relief in western Europe* (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1991), pp.33 and 48, and M. Daunton, *Progress and poverty: an economic and social history of Britain 1700–1850* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), p.452.

<sup>11</sup> King, ‘Poor Relief’, pp. 360–8.

<sup>12</sup> S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p.53.

<sup>13</sup> L. Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers: the English poor laws and the people 1700–1948* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> G. Taylor, *The problem of poverty 1660–1834* (London, Longman, 1969), and K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England 1660–1900* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English poor law history Part I: The old poor law* (London, Frank Cass and Co, reprint 1963), pp. 11–25, and Marshall, *The English poor*, p.252.

<sup>16</sup> Eastwood, *Governing*, p.263.

“indiscriminate relief being given to such as apply for parish relief has been the cause of raising the poor rates” and needed investigation.<sup>17</sup>

### *Providing relief*

Parish ratepayers found themselves regularly confronted by the demands of the parish poor for assistance in times of need, but as Oxley has pointed out, “there was no certainty that there would be an even balance between the supply of money and the demand for relief.”<sup>18</sup> Digby noted that the parochial rating system had grave defects “because it assumed that there was a fairly static society with a reasonable balance between propertied and poor in each area.”<sup>19</sup> The parish authorities closely monitored the provision for the permanent poor and, to a certain extent, it was a regular expense that overseers could plan for. Providing for the casual poor as a result of illness, unemployment or sudden food price inflation was a much more complex problem to contend with and “stretched the political administrative and material resources of many parishes to the limit.”<sup>20</sup> In this respect, increased unemployment and the rising cost of poor relief throughout the rural South in the years after 1815 caused a crisis for the local poor law administrators.<sup>21</sup>

Maclean reported that the increasing poor rates “have crippled the ability of the owners and occupiers of land to provide employment by a perpetual and increased drain upon their resources.”<sup>22</sup> Increasingly, overseers found themselves in a situation torn between the competing demands of the poor requesting assistance and the ratepayers’ insistence

<sup>17</sup> SHC 2589/3/4, ‘Frimley vestry book 12 September 1818’.

<sup>18</sup> G.W.Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales 1601–1834* (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1974), p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> A. Digby, *The poor law in nineteenth century England* (London, Longman, 1982), p.27.

<sup>20</sup> D. Eastwood, ‘The republic in the village parish and poor at Bampton 1780–1834’, *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 12 (1992) 19.

<sup>21</sup> D. A. Baugh, ‘The cost of poor relief in south-east England 1790 –1834’, *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975) 50–68, and G.R. Boyer, *An economic history of the English poor law 1750 –1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 49–50.

<sup>22</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 548A.

on strict economy of parish funds. Lowe reported in 1823 that parish vestries faced twin problems of determining the income of poor families and the wages paid to the unemployed poor.<sup>23</sup> Henry Drummond in 1824 observed that large numbers of able-bodied men in Surrey were totally dependent on poor relief.<sup>24</sup> The Dorking select vestry also reported in the winter of 1822–1823 that severe pressure on the rates had resulted in “numerous hands for whom it is impossible to find any kind of profitable employment.”<sup>25</sup> The parish thus interposed between employer and employee of labour and, by the late 1820s, the scale of these responsibilities was overwhelming the parish authorities.<sup>26</sup> Increasingly, in rural areas parochial officers comprised mostly rate-paying occupiers who were small tenant farmers or small owners, as they became increasingly determined “to minimize all demands on their limited capital assets.”<sup>27</sup>

### *Small and large landowners*

Tensions can also be identified between the small and large landholders within a parish. Small tenant farmers and small rate-paying occupiers in rural areas were always keen to minimise demands on their limited capital assets. This came to the fore after 1815, when the slump in the price of grain increased economic pressure on the small landowner and tenant farmer.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the large landholders with greater resources had access to credit, and often had business investments outside the parish which protected them from the vicissitudes of the market. Charles Barclay, a large landowner in Dorking, and Harvey Combe, a large estate owner in Cobham, both obtained incomes from family brewing businesses, so were fortunate not to be dependent upon their estates for

<sup>23</sup> J. Lowe, *The present state of England in regard to agriculture trade and finance* (London, Longman Hurst Rees Orme and Brown, 1822), p.187.

<sup>24</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, Report H. Drummond p.48.

<sup>25</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, 'Dorking Select Vestry Minutes 25 March 1823'.

<sup>26</sup> Eastwood, *Governing*, p.165.

<sup>27</sup> P. Dunkley, 'Paternalism the magistracy and poor relief in England 1795–1834', *International Review of Social history*, 24 (1979) 392.

<sup>28</sup> P. Dunkley, *The crisis of the old poor law: an interpretive essay* (New York, Garland, 1982) p.78.



income.<sup>29</sup> The country gentlemen and the substantial landowners also had little to do with day-to-day administration of relief in the parish, and many rarely attended vestry meetings. As Armstrong has observed, throughout the country “the wealthy detached themselves from intimate involvement in village life.”<sup>30</sup> Mandler has also pointed out that “the parish was too small to concern them” and case-by-case scrutiny of relief claims was usually left to the overseers, and many large landowners exercised their authority mostly as magistrates.<sup>31</sup> In the parish of Albury Henry Drummond, a large property owner and justice of the peace, did not attend vestry meetings but regularly sat on the bench at the Quarter Sessions.

Many large landholders did not foresee or fully appreciate the gathering crisis of providing for the rising numbers of unemployed poor. In 1832 the Duke of Bedford insisted that “if the farmers would employ a sufficient number of hands for the proper cultivation of their farms there is no surplus labour to complain of.”<sup>32</sup> Drummond, giving evidence before the Select Committee on Labourers Wages, criticised Surrey farmers for encouraging the payment of wages out of the poor rate and stated “that it is prevented directly by preventing the overseers from paying any money except to those labourers employed by him.”<sup>33</sup> In reply sixty-nine, aggrieved farmers and landowners in the hundreds of Blackheath, Godalming and Woking published a reply defending themselves against Drummond’s accusations. They insisted that “it is not the fault of the farmers that the condition of the agricultural labourers is not more improved” and refuted his claim that farmers “universally” indirectly paid part of the wages of labour out of the poor rate.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> D. Taylor, ‘The Combe family of Cobham park Surrey: 1806–1920. Did it take “third generation “ to make “the gentleman” or could nineteenth century brewers acquire gentry status without sacrificing their non-landed income?’ (unpublished M.A. dissertation University of Roehampton 2005), p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> W.A. Armstrong, ‘The countryside’, in F.M.L. Thompson (ed), *The Cambridge social history of Britain 1750 – 1950 Regions and communities* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.90.

<sup>31</sup> P. Mandler, ‘The making of the new poor law redivities’ *Past and Present* 117 (1987) 133.

<sup>32</sup> BL, ‘Duke of Bedford to Lord Holland, Add.MS 51554 Fos 19-20, 19 December 1832.

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers’ Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, Report H. Drummond p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> SHC 7473/box 6, ‘Reply to Henry Drummond (1824) from Hundreds Blackheath; Godalming and Woking’.

Moreover, as large landlords were mainly rentiers, they benefited from the system which assessed rates on occupiers rather than landowners so "the rates fell more heavily on the gentry's own tenants."<sup>35</sup> A dispute arose in the parish of Bletchingley when ratepayers complained that non-parishioners who resided in cottages on large farms were not charged to the rates. A general meeting resolved that cottages on the respective farms would be rated and the bills were to be paid by the occupiers of the farms.<sup>36</sup> As large landowners did not pay rates commensurate with their holdings, the onerous rate burden fell on the smaller tenant. This could prove to be a great hardship and often explains demands from the small ratepayers for re-rating or a reduction in rent.<sup>37</sup> For example, in the parish of Dorking, William Denison, a large landowner, owned a great deal of land and property. Of his total holding, seventy-three per cent was rented out to various farmers in the parish (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 *William Denison's land tax 1830*

Rental Assessment	Occupier Responsible For The Payment Of Rates	Property
£100	William Denison	Denbies And Land
£1 10s	William Denison	Land
£6	Richard Hambling	Land And House
£70	Samuel Bothwell	House, Chalk Pits And Land
£1	William Denison	Land
10s	William Denison	House And Field
£42	John Barlett	Part Shambles Farm
£6	William Skillington	Part Bradley Farm
£2	Richard Greaves	Little Bradley Farm
£13	Richard Greaves	Lords Land
£60	Richard Greaves	Parsonage And Glebe
£20	Richard Greaves	Part Parsonage
£70	Richard Greaves And Others	Part Sond Place Farm
£37	William Denison	Tithes Sond Place And Moorlands
£10	William Denison	Land Late Talbot
£16	William Denison	Tithes Part Denbies

Source: SHC QS6/7/68 Dorking Land Tax Assessment 1830

<sup>35</sup> Dunkley, *The crisis*, p.75.

<sup>36</sup> SHC P20/2/2, 'Bletchingley vestry accounts May 1821'.

<sup>37</sup> Webb and Webb, *English poor*, pp.168–9.

*Assessment of small houses*

An abiding issue focused on the extent to which the independent poor could be taxed to support those on poor relief, without reducing themselves to dependency on parish relief. As Digby has pointed out, “the advisability, or indeed the practicability, of assessing small houses or tenements to the poor rates was a perpetual bone of contention.”<sup>38</sup> By the act of 1814 the poor could gain exemption from paying poor rates if they could prove their inability to pay before two or more justices of the peace in Petty Sessions.<sup>39</sup> However, before 1834 it was common practice in rural Surrey for justices out of session, acting with the consent of parish officers, to discharge the poor from the payment of poor rates. As Maclean stated in his report on Surrey, “exemption from the collection of the assessment generally is extended to that class of persons who are considered barely above the want of parochial relief and would become claimants for it if the collection of the assessment was enforced.”<sup>40</sup> It is possible from some vestry assessment books to identify non-ratepayers. Occupiers might appear with no assessments given, but listed under the heading “the following are poor belonging to the parish therefore not liable to be rated or assessed.”<sup>41</sup> In other parishes it is possible from the parish assessment books to identify those exempt from paying rates. Table 6.4 reveals the situation in Godalming:

Table 6.4 *Godalming rating assessment May 1825*

Assessed	Name	To Pay	Exempt
£3	Thomas Holiday	-	Poor
£3	Widow Brown	7s 6d	
£3	John Avery	7s 6d	
£2 10s	James Kent	-	Poor

Source: SHC 2256/10/5, Godalming Rating Book 4 May 1825 Rate 2s 6d in the £

<sup>38</sup> A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) p.86.

<sup>39</sup> 54 Geo III CAP CLXX c170 1814 Act to Repeal Certain Provisions in Local Acts for the Maintenance and Regulation of the Poor.

<sup>40</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p.564A.

<sup>41</sup> SHC P20/5/3, 'Bletchingley Assessment Book April 1830'.

Daunton has estimated that exemption from the payment of the poor rate, “could well apply to thirty per cent of householders at any one time.”<sup>42</sup> In the large market town of Dorking in 1831–1832 twenty-six per cent of householders were exempt from the payment of rates (see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 *Dorking exemptions from rating 24<sup>th</sup> September 1831–25<sup>th</sup> February 1832*

Dorking Parish	Number Of Ratepayers	Number Classified As Poor Exempt From Paying Rates	Percentage Poor
West Betchworth	23	4	17%
East Betchworth	236	62	26%
Holmwood Borough	257	94	37%
Chipping Borough	163	19	12%
Westcot Borough	82	13	16%
Milton Borough	50	19	38%

Source: 1867/box 5/1, Dorking Assessment Book 24<sup>th</sup> September 1831–25<sup>th</sup> February 1832  
1831–1867 SHC

Further analysis of rateable values of property in Dorking, shows ratepayers with rateable values under £3 were often exempt from paying rates (see Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 *The number of exemptions paying rates in Dorking 24<sup>th</sup> September 1831–25<sup>th</sup> February 1832*

Rateable Value Of Property	£1 10s	£1 10s	£2	£2 10s	£3	£3 10s	£4	£5	£6	£7
West Betchworth	-	-	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Borough	2	1	26	18	11	1	2	0	1	0
Holmwood Borough	1	4	29	19	35	0	1	2	2	1
Chipping Borough	1	1	2	4	7	0	2	2	0	0
Westcot Borough	-	1	8	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Milton Borough	1	1	6	3	7	1	0	0	0	0

Source: SHC Acc1358/4/1, Dorking Assessment Book 24<sup>th</sup> September 1831 – 25<sup>th</sup> February 1832

Of course, exemptions from paying rates affected the funds available for relief of the poor. For example is shown in the parish of Thames Ditton (see Table 6.7).

Table 6.7 *Total exemptions in Thames Ditton for the years 1823–1824 and 1824–1825*

Parish Thames Ditton	Year 1823–1824	Year 1824–1825
Total Amount Levied	£1566 16s 6d	£1359 10s 2d
Empty Houses And Excused Poor	£ 180 4s 11d	£ 175 5s 2d
Total Expended Relief Of Poor	£1386 11s 7d	£1184 5s

Source: SHC 2568/6/1, Thames Ditton Accounts 1823–1825 and  
SHC 2568/6/1, Copy of return to House of Commons 8 November 1824

<sup>42</sup> Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 449.

*Appeal against the poor rates*

Vestry minutes often reveal the exasperation with which many ratepayers viewed the problem of providing for the increasing numbers of poor. Most vestrymen “shared a vision of low rates and an industrious, gainfully employed labour force.”<sup>43</sup> There were often disagreements in vestry meetings when ratepayers protested that the rate levied against their property was excessive. This was not a new phenomenon; for example, in Wimbledon in the eighteenth century vestry meetings had to deal with defaulting ratepayers.<sup>44</sup> As Hindle has observed, “overseers, judgements about the weight of the tax burden were invariably sensitive, but they became particularly controversial in years of economic dislocation”<sup>45</sup>, and this is true for rural Surrey. After 1815 the number of disagreements over proposed new rates increased in rural Surrey. In 1816 the parish of Chessington reminded all ratepayers that if any person, aggrieved of the rate made by the vestry, intended to appeal to the Quarter Session, he or she must give notice to the overseers of the appeal; without it the rate would be binding.<sup>46</sup> The parish of Thames Ditton also informed ratepayers that if they were “aggrieved in their poor rates”, they could appeal, but afterwards all arrears must be immediately paid. If they failed to do so, the parish would enforce recovery of the debt.<sup>47</sup>

*Rating alteration*

Rating could be eased in two ways. Firstly, parishes could reduce the rating bands for the whole parish. At Bisley the vestry set up a committee of eleven substantial ratepayers to investigate the claim that “the rates were unequally and unfairly assessed” and to consider

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<sup>43</sup> Eastwood, *Governing*, p.167.

<sup>44</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.92.

<sup>45</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p. 377.

<sup>46</sup> SHC 3830/4/5(3), ‘Chessington parish accounts March 1816, Letter March 1816 From W. Dalrymple Esq. Chessington Hall’.

<sup>47</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, ‘Thames Ditton vestry minutes 17 September 1815’.

all complaints from aggrieved ratepayers. Some alterations were made in individual assessments and it was proposed, in future the rating was to be lowered by one third.<sup>48</sup> The second method was to reduce the assessments of individual ratepayers. Thus, after complaints from several farmers in Thames Ditton in 1822, the vestry reduced some ratings, shown in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8 *Thames Ditton rating assessments for November 1822*

Name	Assessment	Reduced Assessment
William Speers	£230	£140
William Wood	£145	£105
Lawrence Rodger	£145	£105
J. Scott	£40	£30
John Harper	£106	£88 10s
Mr Kay	£30	£24
Mr Will	£12 10s	£12

Source: SHC 2568/6/1 Thames Ditton Vestry Minutes 15<sup>th</sup> November 1822.

Protracted rating disputes could be extremely time-consuming and expensive to resolve. There are examples of parishes where parish ratepayers were not always satisfied with the judgements of the parish committees. As a consequence, parish vestries went to the expense of revaluing land values by professional surveyors. For example, in the parish of Betchworth in May 1822 two ratepayers, Mr Howard and Mr Humphreys, complained to the vestry that they believed their assessments were too high because they had reduced rents to tenants on properties they owned. A committee of six ratepayers met to make a judgement, agreeing that a reduction “shall be made to any person in his rates showing a receipt or note proving a reduction of rent to have been made to him.”<sup>49</sup> In June there were further complaints from ratepayers “aggrieved with the present rating system.” When the vestry met in November, matters were still unresolved, so it was decided to have the parish professionally surveyed. There were further protests from some ratepayers against the survey and ten of them warned the churchwardens and overseers

<sup>48</sup> SHC P22/5/73, ‘Bisley Vestry Minutes 21 April 1826 and 28 April 1826’.

<sup>49</sup> SHC P22/5/72, ‘Betchworth vestry minutes 7 May 1822’.

that “we shall refuse to allow and oppose the allowance of any and every charge” in respect of the survey. The overseers hired a Mr George King from Paddington to survey the parish. After further protests, the ratepayers finally agreed at the end of November to a rate of 3s in the pound and “a reduction throughout of 25%” on all ratepayers’ assessments.<sup>50</sup>

Epsom established a committee in 1822 to “consider the best means of equalising the assessment of the parish”. Finally, in 1829 after increasing complaints from ratepayers over their rating assessments the vestry resolved to defend the rate and appointed Mr Smallpiece, a professional surveyor, to survey the parish.<sup>51</sup> The parishes of Esher and Byfleet also tried to resolve the rating issues within the parishes, but failed and had to appoint professional surveyors.<sup>52</sup> After many rating disputes in 1832, the parish of Byfleet paid Thomas Paine £30 to make a valuation of the parish. The vestry requested occupiers of land to provide a written account of all the land in their possession and to accompany Mr Paine, along with a parish officer, during the valuation.<sup>53</sup> In Bletchingley too, the vestry received numerous complaints from ratepayers over their assessments. In May 1824 it therefore resolved that if any ratepayer appealed against their rating, the surveyors Senior and Cutter would undertake a valuation of all property in the parish.<sup>54</sup> Here the threat silenced the protestors. Maybe the cost of the valuation or the fear of being re-rated deterred ratepayers from pursuing their complaints. Majendie believed that most just valuations were arrived at by using a committee of the parish “with one or more competent professional persons of the neighbourhood as umpires.”<sup>55</sup> Maclean asserted that when parishes went to the expense of a professional valuation ratepayers were no

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 June 1822, 3 November 1822, 8 November 1822 and 28 November 1822’.

<sup>51</sup> SHC 3132/2/4, ‘Epsom vestry minutes 25 April 1822 and 26 March 1829’.

<sup>52</sup> SHC 238/ES/9/3, ‘Esher vestry minutes 21 May 1827 and 10 March 1828’.

<sup>53</sup> SHC PSH/BY/8/1, ‘Byfleet vestry minutes January 1833’.

<sup>54</sup> SHC P20/2/2, ‘Bletchingley vestry accounts May 1824’.

<sup>55</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 169A .

more satisfied with the results than if the valuation had been made by a committee of the parishioners.<sup>56</sup>

This whole system of revaluing was fraught with difficulties, as, for example, when in October 1824 the Reigate vestry agreed to examine ratepayers' contributions. A committee of vestry members met throughout November to consider the assessments, finally setting the rate at 3s in the pound in December. Unfortunately, the general vestry did not adopt the proposed alterations.<sup>57</sup> Neither did complaints from ratepayers automatically lead to a reduction in their rates. In fact, they could be increased. In Dorking in 1829 eleven ratepayers complained of an "inequality in the assessment of the poor rate" within the parish. The vestry therefore appointed three large landowners, namely William Denison, William Crawford and the chairman of the select vestry, Charles Barclay, to investigate those "aggrieved by their present assessments." The results show in Table 6.9 that some ratepayers had their rates increased.

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<sup>56</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p. 564A .

<sup>57</sup> SHC 3537/2/2, 'Reigate vestry minutes October 1824, 4 November 1824, 11 November 1824, 17 November 1824, 24 November 1824, 1 December 1824 and 15 December 1824',



Table 6.9 *Dorking rating assessments April 1830*

Name	Present Property Rating April 1830	Revised Property Rating April 1830	Increased Or Decreased
Henry Holcomb#	£73	£60 10s (Farm and Land)	Decreased
John Wells#	£26	£26 (Farm and Land)	No Reduction
John Martyr	£10	£13 10s (House)	Increased
Percival Small	£138	£122 15s (Farm and Land)	Decreased
James Tewsley#	£118	£105 (Farm and Land)	Decreased
James Ansell#	£65	£54 (Farm and Land)	Decreased
Richard Balchin#	£222	£190 17s 6d (Farm and Land)	Decreased
Charles March#	£48	£42 10s (Farm and Land)	Decreased
James Wells#	£38	£38 (Farm)	No Reduction
Hannah Stedman	£138	£129 (Farm and Land)	Decreased
Charles Cousins#	£79	£69 7s 6d (Farm and Land)	Decreased
Daniel Carpenter#	£51	£45 10s (Land)	Decreased
John Abel	£95	£70 5s (Farm and Land)	Decreased
Thomas Brown#	£111	£111 (Farm and Land)	No Reduction
Thomas Charwood#	£56	£42 (Farm and land)	Decreased
Anne Attlee	£14	£17 (House)	Increased
Richard Attlee	£11	£14 (House)	Increased
William Fuller	£18	£25 (House)	Increased
Edward Langley	£14	£17 10s (House)	Increased
George Wilsmore	£12	£15 (House)	Increased
John Sanders	£19	£22 (House)	Increased
William Chaldecot	£12	£15 (House)	Increased
Joseph Lynn	£14	£17 10s (House)	Increased
William Cheeseman	£10	£15 (House)	Increased
Thomas William Dade	£12	£14 (House)	Increased
Thomas Spokes	£12	£17 (Two houses)	Increased
William Deane	£20	£26 (House and workshop)	Increased
James White	£13	£16 (House)	Increased
James Cheeseman	£24	£35 (House)	Increased
John Norman	£15	£24 (House)	Increased

Source: SHC LA4/6/1, Dorking Rating Book 16<sup>th</sup> April 1830

# Signifies original protestors: SHC DOM/9/3, Dorking Vestry Minutes 29th January 1830

### *Deficiency in rate payments*

These disagreements increased as rapid inflation and economic recession intensified, making ratepayers worry that spiralling poor relief costs would place them on the verge of pauperism.<sup>58</sup> In 1821 the overseers in the parish of Cranleigh had to report a deficiency in their collection of the poor rates “upwards of £250.”<sup>59</sup> Parish overseers needed ratepayers to pay their rating bills promptly but they had to “tread a fine line between the

<sup>58</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.31.

<sup>59</sup> SHC P58/1/1, ‘Cranleigh vestry minute book 21 April 1823’.

demand of the poor for welfare and the ability and willingness of ratepayers to supply the funds to meet this demand.”<sup>60</sup> The parish officers constantly faced the dilemma caring for those in need whilst not overcharging ratepayers. There was an obvious tension between the two positions, but “they became particularly controversial in years of economic dislocation.”<sup>61</sup> For example, at Horley a rate dispute in 1824 forced the parish to borrow £200 to pay the outstanding county rate and for the continued support of the poor.<sup>62</sup> In general, overseers had to resolve rate disputes quickly, as it was imperative that the poor law administrators enjoyed the support of the ratepayers for the system to operate. This can be seen in Shere where the vestry had to remind the overseers that if any ratepayer appealed against his or her poor rates “you are not to collect more of them than were assessed at the late rate until such appeal is heard.”<sup>63</sup> After a parish committee in Dorking in 1830 had investigated the rating bill, the select vestry reported they were anxious to restore “conciliatory feelings amongst the parishioners of the parish.”<sup>64</sup> Deficits in rate collections affected the revenue available for the relief of the poor and in some parishes in the 1820s late payments and non-payments became a matter of increasing concern. At the same time, overseers were anxious to collect all due rates, as chronic late payments would paralyse the parish relief system. Mr Thomas Lacoast of Chertsey reported in 1817 that, as the rates had increased in the last ten years, overseers were experiencing difficulty in collecting the assessed rates. In 1834 the Abinger vestry complained that “great inconvenience has arisen in consequence of the ratepayers being in arrears”, and the vestry requested the parish officers not to apply for a new rating until the old rate was paid up. Moses Duck, assistant overseer for Egham parish, produced detailed monthly accounts in 1830, which illustrate the difficulty in collecting rates.<sup>65</sup> The parish was constantly in arrears, as far as rate payments due were concerned. These overdue payments resulted in further financial pressure on the overseers to maintain the

<sup>60</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.52.

<sup>61</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p. 377.

<sup>62</sup> SHC P30/5/1, ‘Horley vestry minute book 26 July 1824’.

<sup>63</sup> SHC PSH/SHER/11/13, ‘Shere vestry minutes February 1834’.

<sup>64</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, ‘Dorking select vestry minutes 11 December 1829 and 25 January 1830’.

<sup>65</sup> SHC P1/7/6, ‘Abinger vestry minutes 30 May 1834’.

poor and pay suppliers, as is clearly seen in Table 6.10, which highlights the situation in Egham.

Table 6.10 *Egham rating bills for the year 1830–1831*

Statement of Poor Rates 2 <sup>nd</sup> June–30 <sup>th</sup> June 1830	Rates Uncollected To Date: £252 0s 9d	Rates Granted 14 <sup>th</sup> June: £578 8s 6d	Amount Collected 29 <sup>th</sup> June: £108 9s 4d	Rates Uncollected 30 <sup>th</sup> June: £721 19s 11d
Statement of Poor Rates 1 <sup>st</sup> July–28 <sup>th</sup> July 1830	Rates Uncollected To Date: £721 19s 11d	None Granted	Amount Collected 27 <sup>th</sup> July: £205 12s 10d	Rates Uncollected 28 <sup>th</sup> July: £516 7s 1d
Statement of Poor Rates 29 <sup>th</sup> July–31 <sup>st</sup> August 1830	Rates Uncollected To Date: £516 7s 1d	None Granted	Amount Collected 30 <sup>th</sup> August: £149 14s 11d	Rates Uncollected 31 <sup>st</sup> August: £366 12s 2d
Statement of Poor Rates 1 <sup>st</sup> September – 28 <sup>th</sup> September 1830	Rates Uncollected To Date: £366 12s 2d	Rates Granted 13 <sup>th</sup> September: £578 17s 4d	Amount Collected 27 <sup>th</sup> September: £ 76 13s 10d	Rates Uncollected 28 <sup>th</sup> September: £868 15s 8d
Statement of Poor Rates 29 <sup>th</sup> September – 28 <sup>th</sup> October 1830	Rates Uncollected To Date: £868 15s 8d	None Granted	Amount Collected 27 <sup>th</sup> October: £105 11s	Rates Uncollected 28 <sup>th</sup> October: £763 4s 8d
Statement of Poor Rates 29 <sup>th</sup> October – 30 <sup>th</sup> November	Rates Uncollected To date: £763 4s 8d	None Granted	Amount Collected 29 <sup>th</sup> November: £303 6s 9d	Rates Uncollected 30 <sup>th</sup> November: £459 17s 11d
Statement of Poor Rates 1 <sup>st</sup> December – 28 <sup>th</sup> December	Rates Uncollected To Date: £459 17s 11d	Rates Granted 20 <sup>th</sup> December: £575 9s 1d	Amount Collected 27 <sup>th</sup> December: £ 75 19s 1d	Rates Uncollected 28 <sup>th</sup> December: £959 7s 11d

Source: SHC 2516/2/8, Monthly Abstracts Egham Vestry Accounts, 2<sup>nd</sup> June–28<sup>th</sup> December 1830:

King has commented on the number of bankruptcy notices in provincial newspapers after 1800, which show that “some ratepayers were under very real pressure in the rural south and east.”<sup>66</sup> Majendie noted in his report on Surrey in 1833 that “overseers are almost afraid to press for the rates from the small occupiers, some of whom are so nearly on the verge of pauperism.”<sup>67</sup> In Bletchingley in 1828 widow Brown pleaded poverty and refused to pay her poor rates. She was summoned before the vestry to explain why she could not pay.<sup>68</sup> There are many examples of overseers writing letters to defaulting ratepayers, demanding payment and threatening them with legal action before the issuing of a summons. Elsewhere, the parish vestries in Ticehurst and Westbourne in Sussex were

<sup>66</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.92.

<sup>67</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 175A.

<sup>68</sup> SHC P20/2/2, 'Bletchingley vestry accounts September 1828'.

experiencing difficulties with the collection of rates in the 1820s.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, by the early nineteenth century ratepayers “throughout the rural south were complaining of the burden of poor relief bills.”<sup>70</sup>

### *Right of appeal*

Ratepayers had the right to appeal against their rating, in the first instance to the vestry and then to the Quarter Sessions. In many cases, the Quarter Sessions referred the rating question to one or two justices who lived in the vicinity of the appeal. The justices then could quash the whole rate as unfair, order the overseers to make another rating or just amend the rate of the particular person who had appealed. In July 1825 the Bletchingley vestry met to set a new rate for the relief of the poor, the first rating for the year. It was several months late because the Quarter Sessions had vetoed the one made on 4th May at 2s 6d in the pound, on appeal brought by the ratepayer, William Davis. He had objected to the first rating on the grounds that the tithes in the parish had not been rated. Old rate lists were examined and alterations and augmentations made, yet in July a new rate was still set at 2s 6d in the pound.<sup>71</sup> In fact, the only alteration made in the assessment book was that of the Reverend Jarvis Kenrick, a substantial landowner in the parish. Henceforth, he paid rates on the tithes, valued at £603 15s, which in July 1825 contributed £75 9s to parish relief.<sup>72</sup>

Overseers strove to avoid cases going to the Quarter Sessions, as it caused delays in collecting revenues, and of course they did not wish to alienate ratepayers. In 1817 the overseers in Thames Ditton wished to raise the rate to 2s 6d in the pound but the ratepayers protested. Nonetheless, as the parish was in debt, the ratepayers finally

<sup>69</sup> R. Wells, ‘Poor law reform in the rural south-east; the impact of the ‘Sturges-Bourne Acts’ during the agricultural depression 1815–1835’, *Southern History*, 23 (2001) 52 – 115.

<sup>70</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 92.

<sup>71</sup> SHC P20/2/2, ‘Bletchingley vestry accounts 7 May 1825 and 25 July 1825’.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 4 May 1825, 25 July 1825 and QS2/2/28 Quarter Sessions minute book 13 July 1825’.

agreed to it after protracted discussions.<sup>73</sup> There were further problems in 1819 “owing to the heavy demand on the parish” and the rate had to be raised to 3s in the pound.<sup>74</sup> In October 1823 the Bletchingley parish vestry met to set the new rate, but as the last rate had not been fully collected it gave notice to the ratepayers that if the arrears were not immediately settled they would be summoned. There were further problems in the parish when the vestry set the rate of 3s 6d on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1824. It withdrew the rate after protests, and at a meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February the ratepayers agreed to set the rate at 2s 6d and, in addition, to borrow the “sum of £200 towards defraying the expenses of the parish for the current year.”<sup>75</sup> There were further problems for the vestry in 1832 “in consequence of the heavy expenses brought on the parish principally by the unemployed poor”, with insufficient parish funds to relieve them. On this occasion it decided that instead of trying to raise another rate, the parish should borrow £250 to pay off debts and provide funds for the unemployed poor.<sup>76</sup> When Dorking faced the acute problem of escalating relief costs, the vestry passed the burden onto the ratepayers who immediately protested. To try to offer some assurance of sound financial management within the parish, officials therefore produced monthly audited accounts. These were circulated and gave details of spending, including tables of comparative disbursements with the previous year. The vestry was anxious to gain the support of all ratepayers so as to avoid protracted rating disputes, and was pleased to report a saving of £114 6s 6d for ratepayers in poor relief spending the year 1824–1825.<sup>77</sup> Maclean commented in his report on Surrey how numerous parish officers complained “of the difficulty and trouble in collecting rates” and were concerned that “more of their labour and time was expended in collecting the rates than of any part other part of their duties.”<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, ‘Thames Ditton vestry minutes 11 April 1817’.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘14 November 1819’.

<sup>75</sup> SHC P20/2/2, ‘Bletchingley vestry accounts October 1823, 4 February 1824 and 23 February 1824’.

<sup>76</sup> SHC P20/2/2, ‘Bletchingley vestry accounts 2 May 1832’.

<sup>77</sup> DOM/9/3, ‘Dorking select vestry minutes 25 March 1825’.

<sup>78</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 568A .

Overseers also had the legal responsibility to see that, wherever possible, all rates were collected. In Dorking in July 1832 it was reported that the two overseers, Mr Daniel Carpenter and Mr George Balchin, had failed to collect all the rates due. The select vestry wrote to them, warning that if all arrears were not collected immediately “application would be made to the justices to compel the said overseers to do their duty.” By September the overseers had failed to collect all the arrears and were threatened with a summons “for neglect of duty.”<sup>79</sup> After further threats the overseers finally produced a list of all defaulters in March 1833 and most of the due rate was collected.<sup>80</sup> In 1836 there were further troubles for the then overseers, who then had a deficiency in their rate collection of £1218 10s. A select vestry summoned them to appear before the justices at the next Quarter Sessions to answer to the charges, but matters were settled when the overseers were able to show they had collected a large proportion of the outstanding debt.<sup>81</sup>

### *Balanced books*

The yearly expenditure accounts recorded by the parish and reported to Parliament do show an increase in relief payments. However, as King has pointed out, these figures reflect “less the scale and intensity of local poverty than the outcome of a yearly negotiation process” between ratepayers and poor law administrators within the parish.<sup>82</sup> The funding of poor relief was linked to the “depth of the pockets of ratepayers” more directly than to the scale of poverty.<sup>83</sup> Faced with demands for relief from poverty-stricken parishioners, overseers “must have found it extremely difficult to reconcile their legal obligation to relieve the impotent with their social responsibility not to overburden their fellow ratepayers.”<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, ‘Dorking select vestry minutes 30 July 1832 and 10 September 1832’.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 March 1833.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 March 1836.

<sup>82</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.90.

<sup>83</sup> Dunkley, *Crisis*, p.363.

<sup>84</sup> S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The micro politics of poor relief in rural England c1550–1750* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 2004), pp.452-3.

To a certain extent the annual returns do reveal a rise in relief costs, but there are problems when using this source as a benchmark for escalating costs. For rural Surrey it is unusual to see profit and loss accounts that take full account of all debts. Often the figures are ambiguous and the “balanced books” that are presented are a myth. At the end of the accounting year outstanding debts might be carried forward to the following year: contractors were not always paid and sometimes overseers let allowances to out-parishioners fall into arrears. When the magistrates examined the accounts for the parish of Bletchingley in March 1823 they noted that £454 4s 2d was due to tradesmen and only £250 1s 9d cash-in-hand was available to settle the debts. This shortfall is not recorded in the vestry accounts.<sup>85</sup> This was common practice in parishes. In Ewell, for instance, overseers did not record unpaid bills in the accounts, but merely noted them at the bottom of the accounts (see Table 6.11).

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<sup>85</sup> SHC P20/6/4, ‘Bletchingley vestry accounts 31 March 1823’.

Table 6.11 *Ewell Parish Accounts October 1832–March 1833*

Debit		Credit	
October Weekly Pay	£ 5 4s	Balance Due Last Account	£275 18s 8d
November Weekly Pay	£ 20 14s 6d	Poor Rates	£619 1s 6d
December Weekly Pay	£ 20 12s	Flints Sold	£ 3 7s 6d
January Weekly Pay	£ 21	Two Pigs Sold	£ 5 12s 6d
Surgeon	£ 31 10s	Flints Sold	£ 1 10s
Cash Lent To Surveyor	£103 15s	Paid For Labour	£ 4 7s 6d
February Weekly Pay	£ 21	Half Year Rent Parish Close	£ 5
March Weekly Pay	£ 21	Half Year Rent Chamber Mead	£ 12 10s
Paid For Breaking Flints	£ 32 4s 5d	<b>Total</b>	£927 9s 8d
Paid Grubbing Flints And Levelling Ground	£ 14 1s 8d		
½ Year Salary Assistant Overseer	£ 20		
25 <sup>th</sup> March 3 Weeks Pay	£ 15 15s		
Rate Arrears	£ 65 4s 6d		
Total	£726 10s 5d		
Balance Due To Parish	£201 8s 3d		
	£927 18s 8d		
Note:	Balance Due To Parish £201 8s 3d	Leaving Bills Unpaid Of £350	

Source: SHC 3831/3/3, Ewell Vestry Accounts 29<sup>th</sup> March 1833.

Similarly, Esher's overseers, lacking funds, left bills unpaid at the end of the financial year. Again, these were not recorded, but in April 1834 the vestry ordered the incoming overseers to pay the balances of bills, amounting to £89, to suppliers from the new rate.<sup>86</sup> In Shere in April 1831 a vestry held a meeting to consider "the several sums left unpaid by the late overseers for the relief of the poor."<sup>87</sup> It decided to set the new rate at 3s in the pound "to liquidate the expenses and make up the amount of money paid into the overseers' hands on their accepting office."<sup>88</sup> Even if these debts were not fully recorded in the accounts, they remained debts and had to be settled from parish funds. These hidden costs must have compounded the problem for many parishes when they tried to provide for their poor, while at the same time trying to keep down rating bills. Naturally, these hidden costs put further pressure on the overseers to raise extra revenue to

<sup>86</sup> SHC 238/ES/9/3, 'Esher vestry minutes 10 April 1834'.

<sup>87</sup> SHC PSH/SHER/8/1, 'Shere resolution book 24 April 1831'.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*



“balance the books.” My research bears out King’s view that the figures at the bottom of parish accounts cannot simply be accepted as the true expenditure figure. Expenditure figures on their own do not always reflect the scale and intensity of local poverty.<sup>89</sup> This is a subject which is under-researched and more work in local archives is required in order to fully appreciate the extent of this problem.

### *Agricultural Profitability*

Many ratepayers believed that the increasing burden of poor rates was responsible for diminishing agricultural profitability. George Smallpiece, a farmer with forty years’ experience of farming, saw the poor rate as crippling. He farmed 1,000 acres in Cobham and reported to the Select Committee on Agriculture in 1833 that many small farmers were in difficulty, attributing this to the “ruinous increase of the poor rate.”<sup>90</sup> He reported on a farm near Guildford “that is thrown out of occupation because they do not pay the poor rates” and a farm near Farnham “over-cropped partly because of the poor rate.” He described the farm as “eat-up with poor”, as it was let at 18d per acre and the poor rate was set at 8s per acre.<sup>91</sup> Howlett Jago, a land surveyor, also complained that while there had been little difference in the average price of produce during the last fourteen years, “poor rates and other parochial assessments continue to increase.”<sup>92</sup> In reply to Rural Queries the parishes of Albury, Betchingley, Buckland, Cobham, East Clandon, Ewhurst, Farnham, Guildford Holy Trinity, Guildford St Mary, Limpsfield, Newdigate, Merrow and Send and Ripley all attributed declining profitability to increasing poor rates “which have of late years pressed so heavily on farmers.”<sup>93</sup> Farmers in the parishes of Crowhurst, Cobham and Godstone also complained that “repeated bad seasons” had reduced farmers’ capital and increased unemployment, which in turn had so raised the poor rates

<sup>89</sup> King, *Poverty*, pp.88–9 .

<sup>90</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Evidence G. Smallpiece Question 12777 p. 612.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, Question 12691 p.608 and Question 12694–12710 p.609.

<sup>92</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Evidence R. Howlett Jago Question 11557 p. 545.

<sup>93</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 36, Reply Betchingley p. 475d.

that many small farmers found it difficult to pay.<sup>94</sup> Majendie reported that in Lingfield one small farmer complained that the pressure of the poor rate “had become so burthensome that he could not retain his property...the poor rates are crushing him.”<sup>95</sup>

Many small tenants questioned their rating bills, deeming them excessive. In Dorking in 1829 the churchwardens and overseers received an address signed by eleven farmers requesting that the vestry should “consider their grievances in respect of the inequality in the assessment of the poor rate.”<sup>96</sup> One of the farmers who signed, Charles Cosins, a tenant farmer, did have his rating reduced in 1830 but found that increasing rating bills and crippling debts resulted in him having to relinquish the tenancy on the following properties in 1831 (see Table 6.12). In November 1831 the vestry received a letter from Charles Cosins, then dependent on the parish, “applying for relief and proposing to go with his family to America.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 36, Reply Crowhurst p. 479, Cobham p. 477d and Godstone p. 481d.

<sup>95</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 175A .

<sup>96</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, 'Dorking vestry minute book 29 January 1830'.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 November 1831.

Table 6.12 Charles Cosins Rate Assessment 1824–1832

Tenant Charles Cosins 1824–1831 For Wickes Land, Redland Farm, Coppices and Land late Grey	Total Rating Assessment	To Pay
Assessed May 1824 Rate 3s in £	£86	£12 18s
Assessed September 1824 Rate 3s 6d in £	£86	£15 1s
Assessed April 1825 Rate 3s 6d in £	£86	£15 1s
Assessed September 1825 Rate 4s in £	£86	£17 14s
Assessed April 1826 Rate 3s 6d in £	£86	£15 1s
Assessed October 1826 Rate 4s 6d in £	£86	£19 7s
Assessed April 1827 Rate 3s 6d in £	£86	£15 1s
Assessed October 1827 Rate 4s in £	£86	£17 14s
Assessed April 1828 Rate 3s in £	£86	£12 18s
Assessed October 1828 Rate 4s 6d in £	£86	£19 7s
Assessed April 1829 Rate 3s 6d in £	£86	£15 1s
Assessed October 1829 Rate 4s 6d in £	£86	£19 7s
Assessed April 1830 Rate 4s in £	£69 7s 6d	£13 17s 6d
Assessed October 1830 Rate 5s in £	£69 7s 6d	£17 6s 10 ½ d
Assessed May 1831 Rate 3s 6d in £	£69 7s 6d	£12 2s 9 ¾ d
Assessed Oct 1831 Rate 4s in £	£69 7s 6d	£13 17s 6d
Steere and Steere (owners) Assessed April 1832 4s in £	£69 7s 6d	£13 17s 6d
James Ansell (tenant) Assessed November 1832 4s 6d in £	£69 7s 6d	£15 12s 2 ¼ d

Source: SHC LA4/6/1, Dorking Rating Book 1824–1828, Rating Book AC/1358/4/1 1829–1832 and QS6/7/68 1824–1832

### *Labour schemes before 1830*

Parish minute books indicate that vestries made desperate attempts in the 1820s to keep rate bills down by finding schemes to employ the poor. They hoped this would break the spiral by which the parish wage bill was increasingly transferred to the rates. Local elites had an incentive to try to make such schemes work by paying for tools or stock. In fact,

they tried to do anything to re-establish independent work in order to reduce the financial drain placed on poor law resources. For example, in the large parish of Epsom in 1816 the vestry requested farmers in the parish to take on extra hands. Only six men obtained work, leaving the remaining twenty-two unemployed and dependent on the parish. The vestry repeated the scheme in 1817, when there were thirty-three unemployed men, but it only found work for sixteen of them. The vestry reported that seventeen landholders had not shown any intention of offering work and so “application” was now made to them. In May the vestry was still very anxious to employ parish men and recommended occupiers of land only to employ those with settlement rights in the parish, as it was hoped to prevent the rising cost of relief.<sup>98</sup> Parishes continued to instigate work schemes in order to avoid escalating relief bills. Such schemes may have relieved the situation temporarily, but in most rural parishes, entirely dependent on agriculture, to find work for the unemployed was impossible.

Where parishes had introduced labour schemes many parishioners complained of the use of rates to finance such schemes. This effectively subsidised some ratepayers, especially farmers, who were the beneficiaries of cheap labour, to the detriment of other ratepayers who could offer no employment. By accepting his quota of the unemployed in proportion to the assessed value of his property, a farmer could be relieved of paying part of his rates. The hope was that farmers would prefer to employ more workers than to pay the parish the deficiency in their allotted rate. Ratepayers who did not need the labour, felt they were discriminated against. Small tenant farmers, who often employed little labour, also complained. After the riots of 1830 many parishes again initiated labour schemes to try to avoid further unrest (see Chapter Eight).

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<sup>98</sup> SHC 3132/2/3, ‘Epsom vestry minutes 15 April 1816, 14 March 1817 and 2 May 1817’.

*Conclusion*

Parish overseers and vestries were clearly well acquainted with the local poverty problems. As King has recognised, the local administrators had the difficult task of treading “a fine line between the demand of the poor for welfare and the ability and willingness of ratepayers to supply the funds to meet the demand.”<sup>99</sup> In rural Surrey after 1815, as in other southern counties, there was an increasing struggle between the parish authorities and the ratepayers, in which each attempted to shift their rating burden to others because of increasing poor law expenditure. It has been seen overseers needed the support of the ratepayers they represented, but increasingly in the late 1820s there were often rating contentions. Parish overseers were always anxious to pacify ratepayers and to settle the disputes quickly to ensure money was available for poor relief. It is also evident that the national poor law statistics do not always reflect the true scale and intensity of local poverty. At the end of the financial year many Surrey parishes did not record all their costs for the government returns. In fact, costs were frequently “carried over” into the following year. Consequently, expenditure figures cannot be relied on to reflect the true scale and intensity of parish poverty. This is important as it may help to explain the difficulties the parish officials experienced in collecting the necessary funds, providing increasing parish relief and trying to balance the books. This whole area of the relationship between the ability of ratepayers to pay their poor rates and the scale of relief allowances required by the parishes is a key issue which is under researched but, as this chapter on rural Surrey indicates needs, to be undertaken.

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<sup>99</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 52.

## Chapter Seven

### The Voice Of The Poor

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There is a large body of scholarship about nineteenth century poverty, but the voices of the rural poor are seldom heard, or worse they “are reduced to faceless components of some abstract economic model.”<sup>1</sup> As Alannah Tomkins and Steven King have indicated, the Webbs and D. Marshall portray paupers “as illustrations of policy in practice rather than as individual people.”<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, it is difficult to recreate the real world of the agricultural labourer. To understand the poor, and the plight of the poor, rural agricultural labourer, one must consider the priorities held by the poor themselves. As Keith Snell has stated “the social insensitivity of so many nineteenth century commentators makes this hard to assess.”<sup>3</sup> Even so, it is sometimes possible to glean a few basic facts by family reconstitution. Labourers can be traced in parish records, vestry minutes and overseers’ account books, farm papers, settlement certificates and in the documentation generated by the many labour schemes instituted by parishes after the Swing Riots of 1830. Nonetheless, this information is limited. As Hobsbawn and Rudé have commented, “except for their grave stones and their children, they left nothing identifiable behind them for the marvellous surface of the British landscape.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G.C. Smith, “The poor in blindness:” Letters from Mildenhall Wiltshire 1835–6, in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling poverty. the voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English poor law history Part 1: The old poor law* (London, Frank Cass and Co, reprint 1963), and D. Marshall, *The English poor in the eighteenth century* (New York, Routledge, 1969 reprint), also S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The poor in England 1750–1850 An economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003), p.2.

<sup>3</sup> K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor social change and agrarian England 1660–1900* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.9.

<sup>4</sup> E. Hobsbawn and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), p.11.

*Pauper letters*

The records of poor law administration are available in great quantities but “they tell us remarkably little about the poor themselves and the circumstances which brought them into dependence on poor relief.”<sup>5</sup> As “we are dealing with one of the most illiterate, subdued, silent, maligned and shadowy classes in nineteenth century society” there is a paucity of written evidence by the poor themselves.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in order to try to identify what were their priorities, we have to examine in detail the few records that they did leave. One valuable source for historians are pauper letters, written requesting relief from the parish. These letters portray “the experiences of paupers caught up”<sup>7</sup> in requesting relief. From his study of Essex pauper letters, Sokoll considers them “of paramount interest to anyone concerned with the history of the English poor law.”<sup>8</sup> He concedes every pauper letter is “a narrative account written for a specific purpose and, as such, it is bound up with strategic interests”, but at the same time it is a territory “which provides us with the rich subject matter for the historical interpretation of paupers’ letters.”<sup>9</sup> Predominately the voice heard is the voice of the agricultural labourer living outside his parish of settlement because non-resident paupers had to write asking for relief and the letters often give detailed descriptions of personal circumstances. Paupers living within the parish of settlement, on the other hand, usually negotiated their relief payments in the vestry, so there are very few, if any, written records of this negotiation. In fact the select vestry in the parish of Frimley received a letter from a Mrs Gates (who lived in the parish) requesting relief. She was refused as they were of the opinion “if Mrs Gates required parochial relief

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<sup>5</sup> G. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales 1601–1834* (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1974), p.51.

<sup>6</sup> K.D.M. Snell, ‘Deferential bitterness: the social outlook of the rural proletariat in England and Wales’ in M.L. Bush (ed), *Social orders and social classes in Europe since 1500: studies in social stratification* (London, Longman, 1992), p.162.

<sup>7</sup> S. King, “It is impossible for our vestry to judge his case into perfection from here.” *Managing the Distance Dimensions of Poor Relief*, *Rural History*, 16 (2005) 180.

<sup>8</sup> T. Sokoll, *Essex pauper letters 1731–1837* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2000), p.3.

<sup>9</sup> T. Sokoll, ‘Old age in poverty: The record of the Essex pauper letters’ in T. Hitchcock P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling poverty. The voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), p.146.

that she ought personally to have appeared before the vestry.”<sup>10</sup> According to King, letters written by the out-paupers themselves or by the overseers who dealt with them “provide the historian with pauper and overseers’ narratives.”<sup>11</sup> In some Surrey parishes small collections have survived, as at Chessington and Shere.<sup>12</sup> The Surrey letters were mostly written on behalf of the pauper by the overseer, although there are a very few examples of letters written by the paupers themselves. It must be stressed that these letters were not a personal correspondence for they are addressed to the overseers, people responsible for the administration of the poor laws.

### *Appeals for help*

Paupers living away from their settlement wrote back to their parish of settlement, or persuaded others (local figures with status, with professions like doctors or overseers) to do so to support their case for relief. For example, G. Elstone, a large farmer, wrote to the overseers of Farnham in support of Thomas Hills thus: “Thomas Hills have [sic] been in my employ about ten years and have always found him an industrious sober man, really worthy of your assistance.”<sup>13</sup> Parish officials often pleaded the case for a pauper, justifying the need for relief or the need to increase the amount of relief. In 1819 the Bristow family living in Esher were in great distress and as John Bristow had settlement in Shere, the vestry clerk wrote to the overseers there on 13 June 1819. “I know of no blame whatever to be attached to them, their misfortunes are not attributable to any misconduct, are deserving of your consideration.”<sup>14</sup> On the 20 May 1833 Jane Hall wrote anxiously from Brentford in Middlesex to the overseers in Caterham, stating that her children had smallpox and signed it “I am your humble servant.”<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Struddle, a pauper of Chaldon living in Epsom in 1817, wrote to the overseers requesting her

<sup>10</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, ‘Frimley select vestry 30 November 1819’.

<sup>11</sup> King, “Its impossible”, p.180.

<sup>12</sup> SHC 3830/4/8, ‘Chessington parish records, and PSH/SHER/28/1–14 Shere parish records’.

<sup>13</sup> SHC FP1/3/3, ‘Farnham letter 7 August 1833’.

<sup>14</sup> SHC PSH/SHER/28/1, ‘Shere, J. Master letter 13 June 1819’.

<sup>15</sup> SHC LA2/2/21, ‘Caterham parish records letter J.Hall 1833’.



allowance to be continued and pointed out that “I am above seventy-five years and very infirm, not likely therefore to trouble you long.”<sup>16</sup>

To receive relief, paupers had to adhere to a certain protocol and this applied both to appeals at the vestry door and by letter. Of course evidence of the face to face negotiation for relief often went unrecorded. For Surrey there are a few examples of the records of such meetings. For example John Young was refused bread by the Frimley select vestry because of his “insolence at the vestry” and only after “being sensible of the impropriety of his former conduct” was he restored to the relief list.<sup>17</sup> When Mrs Burgis applied for some clothes for her child she was refused but it was recorded in the Egham vestry minutes that “when she comes in a proper manner to ask for them she probably will be allowed.”<sup>18</sup> The letters were also written in a certain tone, justifying the need for relief and making the case of being one of the “deserving poor.” As Pamela Sharpe and Peter King have pointed out, paupers writing to the overseers employed strategies to strengthen their case for obtaining a higher level of relief or regular payments.<sup>19</sup> These varied depending on the character of both the pauper and the overseer they were dealing with – some letters are “deferential in tone, some obsequious, others demanding.”<sup>20</sup> King has identified that when writing, paupers “mixed strategic threats of costly unwelcome returns, with finely tuned pleas of hardship and deferential references to their respectability.”<sup>21</sup> This meant that paupers were not able to speak freely nor could they step outside the acceptable parameters, for if they did, parish officials often threatened to withdraw their assistance. Take the case of Mrs Penfold who lived in Sunbury (Middlesex)

<sup>16</sup> SHC P28/4/276, ‘Letter to overseers in Chaldon from Elizabeth Studdle 28 July 1817’.

<sup>17</sup> SHC 2589/3/1, ‘Frimley select vestry minutes 14 December 1819’.

<sup>18</sup> SHC Acc1498/1, ‘Egham vestry minutes 7 August 1825’.

<sup>19</sup> P. Sharpe, ‘The bowels of compation. A labouring family and the law c1790–1834’, in T. Hitchcock P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling poverty. The voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), pp. 87–108, and P. King, ‘Social inequality, identity and the labouring poor in eighteenth-century England in H. French and J. Barry, *Identity and Agency in England, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.60–86.

<sup>20</sup> P. Sharpe, ‘The bowels of compation. A labouring family and the law c1790–1834’, in T. Hitchcock P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling poverty. The voices and strategies of the English poor 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), p. 103.

<sup>21</sup> King, ‘Social inequality’, p.61

but had a settlement in Mickleham: on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1827 she wrote a letter to certain people in the parish of Mickleham in which she complained about the amount of assistance awarded. In reply the vestry clerk pointed out that “officers and others in vestry this day say they are astonished at you troubling private individuals with statements and complaints against officers and others which they consider perfectly unfounded and beg they may have no more complaints of this; it was also considered your pay was quite ample.” The letter ends with the threat of withdrawal of assistance: “deceive not yourself, act in a proper upright manner and there is not an individual in this parish but would feel a pleasure in adding to your comforts (you have more than once been spoken highly of in this vestry but I am sorry now to experience a reverse). Strive then to regain that good opinion you have by misconduct forfeited, and feel assured it will be immediately acknowledged.”<sup>22</sup> This reply clearly illustrates that Mrs Penfold had been truculent and had pleaded for relief too aggressively. Another pauper, Hares, living in Ottery St Mary in Devon, was also reprimanded for complaining. In reply the vestry clerk of Mickleham wrote:

“the officers desire me to say they have a letter handed to them from the rector (received by him from you), feel greatly surprised at your troubling gentlemen with such a fictitious tale, and putting them to the expense of postage on a subject they are too well acquainted with to pay any attention to, what alteration has been made in your pay was done by order of vestry, and not without a reason, and which, if you are not satisfied you have the alternative of coming home to the poorhouse, but be assured, the conduct you are now pursuing will not lessen any difficulties you may be in, (as there is a proper way) by you making your case known to Mr Seaward to

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<sup>22</sup> SHC PSH/MIC/9/5, ‘Mickleham vestry minutes letter B. Haynes 6 April 1827’.

get them alleviated, and not by sending scrawls to individuals which not be attended to.”<sup>23</sup>

### *Pauper emigrant letters*

Pauper emigrant letters provide another valuable source, especially as they “contain testimonies from people who do not normally leave archival residue for prosperity.”<sup>24</sup> These letters reflect on life in England from a different perspective. As they were no longer dependent on the parish for relief, the writers did not have to be so constrained. However, the supply of these letters is limited. Charlotte Erickson’s research into American migration and emigrant letters points out that the poor were the least literate and were “not well represented in the surviving American evidence.”<sup>25</sup> Even so, Eric Richards has argued that even if only semi-literate, the migrant in a new colony “was almost bound to put pen to paper and to write home to his people” and would “record his own thoughts, possibly his view of the world, in a direct manner.”<sup>26</sup> The emigrant letter exposes the mental world of the people who emigrated.

Emigration to North America between 1815 and 1865 saw more than one million people leave Britain for a new life. Duppa wrote in 1831 that, in times of large scale unemployment, the next step was emigration: “wherever a man can best dispose of his labour, talent or ingenuity to the advantage of his family and himself there is his country.”<sup>27</sup> Upper Canada (now Ontario), the destination of the Petworth emigrants, was one of a number of settlement colonies administered through the colonial office. Labourers might work on farms, though many young men were given jobs on public

<sup>23</sup> SHC PSH/MIC/9/5, ‘Mickleham Vestry Minutes, letter B. Haynes 24 November 1824’.

<sup>24</sup> E. Richards, ‘Voices of British and Irish migrants in nineteenth century Australia’ in C. Pooley and I. Whyte (eds), *Migrants emigrants and immigrants. A social history of migration* (London, Routledge, 1991), p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> C. Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> E. Richards, ‘A voice from below Benjamin Boyce in South Australia 1839–1846’, *Labour History*, 27 (1974) 65.

<sup>27</sup> B.F. Duppa, *The causes of the present condition of the labouring classes in the south of England* (London, Saunders and Benning Law, 1831), pp.97–8.

works, as, for example, clearing the land or building canals. After a year or two in the new country, emigrants could achieve comparative prosperity and independence.

For every year of sailing, the Petworth committee published small pamphlets or single sheets of one or more letters, which they distributed freely or very cheaply to local inhabitants. Reverend Sockett also sent some Petworth letters to editors of Sussex newspapers for publication. At the time, newspaper editors also published letters from their own sources.<sup>28</sup> As emigrant letters were being used at the time as a means of encouraging further emigration, it was important to publish letters that portrayed emigration in a positive light. Reverend Sockett encouraged the Petworth emigrants to write home, but at the same time was determined that the Petworth letters he had published were free from any suspicion of being tampered with. Nonetheless, he did operate a selection process. Sockett was less likely to publish letters from people who had joined the emigration scheme at the last minute to fill the ships. He referred to these (privately) as “the scum who rose to the top at the last,” seeing them as unreliable emigrants and likely to give the emigration scheme a bad name.<sup>29</sup>

Sockett sometimes did omit certain facts in the published versions of the letters. For example, John Capling reported after the family’s arrival in Canada that four of his children and his wife had died. He wrote of their burial that he had to “wrap them up in the rinds of trees and dig holes and put them in myself” (these details were omitted).<sup>30</sup> At the same time, some emigrants reported adversity and Sockett printed these accounts. William Wright wrote of storms at sea “when the wind was so heavy that they reefed all the sails” and of the “tedious passage of eight weeks” when he was seasick for three

<sup>28</sup> BL Collingdale, *Portsmouth Portsea and Gosport Herald and Chichester Reporter, United Service Chronicle, Sussex Advertiser, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Kent Advertiser*.

<sup>29</sup> WSRO Petworth House Archives, ‘Letter Sockett to Wyndham, 23 August 1838’.

<sup>30</sup> W. Cameron, S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers’ letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2000), Capling to brother, letter No 21 28 August 1832, p.43.

weeks.<sup>31</sup> Rebecca Longhurst wrote of her husband's infant sister, "little Hester died on the salt water."<sup>32</sup> Others encountered illness in Canada and these letters were also published. William Phillips reported in 1832 that "here is a great deal of sickness in the country, the cholera morbus is raging very much in some places."<sup>33</sup>

### *Fraudulent letters?*

Some published emigrant letters may have been altered, were fraudulent or had been carefully selected for publication. Rumours certainly circulated at the time that the letters published after the 1830 parish-aided emigration scheme from Corsley in Wiltshire were fakes.<sup>34</sup> To try to allay fears of fraudulent letters being published, newspaper editors guaranteed the letters' authenticity. Indeed the Petworth printer, Phillips, who published the Petworth emigrant letters, kept the original letters or "well attested copies" of the published letters, and made them available for examination. When Charles Barclay published the Dorking emigrant letters he insisted that "the letters are literal copies of the originals except for the spelling and the omission of some repetitions."<sup>35</sup>

The letter writers themselves also took measures to prove there had been no letter substitution. One of the most popular ways was to tear off a corner of a sheet of paper that would be left behind and later matched up when the letter arrived from abroad. Other measures used included emigrants taking with them signed pages or a variety of agreed tokens, signs or seals to be included in the letter. Cornelius Cosens from Dorking travelled to the Waterloo Township in Canada in 1832 and in his letter of October 1832

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<sup>31</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), W. Wright to James Wright, letter August 1832, pp.22–4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, R. Longhurst to mother, letter 4 October 1832, pp.25–7.

<sup>33</sup> W. Cameron, S.Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), W. Phillips to Mrs Newell, letter No 13, 5 August 1832, p.29.

<sup>34</sup> G. Poulett Scope, 'Conditions of the labouring classes. Wiltshire emigrants to Canada', *Quarterly Review*, 46 (1832), 349–90.

<sup>35</sup> C. Barclay, 'Address to the inhabitants of Dorking', in C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), pp. 5–9.

commented that “some people in England think that letters are opened but there is no such thing.”<sup>36</sup> However, rumours continued to circulate that this had been done. When James and Hannah Tilley emigrated in 1833 they were concerned that letters were being altered on arrival in England. As a result, they took with them from Petworth a copy of the published 1832 letters. On arrival in Canada they confirmed in their letter home that “you need not think the letters are forged which have been sent home; for I have shewed the book to several that sent letters and they say that they are exactly as they sent them.”<sup>37</sup>

### *The Petworth and Dorking letters*

The letters used here are the 144 published letters written between the years 1832 and 1837 by the Petworth emigrants (which include the Dorking emigrant letters). These letters were written by those in low wage occupations, mainly agricultural labourers and many single men who had had difficulty in finding a permanent job in England. For my research the letters are a very relevant source, as they were written by labourers who had lived and worked in the south of England at the beginning of the nineteenth century and had emigrated because of economic difficulties. Historians are agreed that they provide an invaluable means of understanding the priorities of the rural poor.<sup>38</sup> From them, it is possible to identify common factors that affected the lives of the rural agricultural labourers before emigration, and which contributed to their decision to emigrate.

Of the letters examined, most were written and sent during the first months or years of the writers' emigration, when memory of home and working conditions was still vivid. In them, the emigrants usually describe the journey and give first impressions of life in Upper

<sup>36</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), C. Cosins to John Bartlett letter 7 October 1832 in *Letters from Dorking* pp.14–5.

<sup>37</sup> W. Cameron, S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), J. and H. Tilley to friends and neighbours letter No 83 29 July 1833 pp. 140–1.

<sup>38</sup> Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*, and D. Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of consolation* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1994) and Richards, 'A voice' and 'Voices of British and Irish' and M. Vance, 'Advancement Moral Worth and Freedom' in N. Landsman(ed), *Nation and Province in the First British Empire* (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 2001),

Canada, and then compare their new circumstances with their prior existence in England. Poor emigrants comment on the possibility of upward mobility, visible decline in social deference, the importance of the common table, the freedom to hunt, and to travel freely for work. These are themes that were universal and repeated in the letters of Scandinavian, German and Irish emigrants.<sup>39</sup>

*Poor law and the treatment of the poor*

To a certain extent some of the letters reveal the attitudes of the poor to the poor law and they give a limited glimpse into the world of the labourer. As noted above, to receive relief paupers had to be deemed deserving, and if they failed to satisfy the overseers they did not always receive assistance. Bowyer has observed that the wording of almost all surviving allowance scales indicates that “only industrious labourers were granted relief.”<sup>40</sup> The amount varied, as overseers had no intention of giving poor people excessive help, and the amount was also determined by the available funds collected from parish rates. Kidd has identified economic change at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century as poor relief became increasingly the central component in the family economies that created “a crisis of paternalism in which the future of the Poor Law was conceived as a major problem.”<sup>41</sup> George Coleman referred to the way in which the “deserving poor” were relieved in Canada, compared to the treatment previously received in England. “I have not been able to work for five weeks, I am fast recovering and now have not to meet the frowns of the overseer and be called a poor pauper but I am looked upon and receive kindness without grudging.”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Vance, ‘Advancement Moral, p.172 and C. Erickson, (1994) *Leaving England, essays on British emigration in the nineteenth century* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1994), pp.54–6.

<sup>40</sup> G. Boyer, ‘The economic role of the English poor law c.1780–1834’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1982), p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> J. Kidd, *State society and the poor in nineteenth century England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999), p.14.

<sup>42</sup> W. Cameron, S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers’ letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2000), G. Coleman to Mr J Marten, letter No 103 17 December 1835, p.188.

By the late 1820s, the English labourers' "spirit of independence and self-respect" may well have become numb, as increasing numbers of them found that their only source of income was parish poor relief.<sup>43</sup> Thus, in time of want the labourer depended entirely on the goodwill of the employer and on the parish. William Cobbett commented in 1830 that "no human being was ever before treated so unjustly with so much insolence and with such damnable barbarity as the working people of England have been within the sixteen and particularly the last ten years."<sup>44</sup> Sturt also commented on the plight of the rural agricultural labourer, observing that "one hears of them spoken of as an alien and objectionable race, worth nothing but to be made to work ...that the English labouring classes are a lower order of beings, who must be treated accordingly."<sup>45</sup> Writing from Canada, William Tilley confirms the scarcity of work in England in the early 1830s and the restricted freedom of the agricultural labourer. In Canada "a man has to live here by the work of his hands and not the assistance of parish, which they can do comfortably if they are steady. There is no fear of starving in this country, there is, no beggars in this country."<sup>46</sup> Frank Mellish also commented that in Canada "it is far better than being beholden to the parish."<sup>47</sup>

In England many labourers also protested that parochial relief was often inadequate to keep a man and his family. George Rose appeared at the Betchworth vestry in November 1832, complaining that he was presently employed working on the road for 10s per week and could not maintain his family. He stated he would turn to crime and his family "will be much better off without him if he was sent to gaol."<sup>48</sup> As a result of this outburst he was held in custody by the parish officers, who stated they had "been insulted in the

<sup>43</sup> Lord Ernle, *English farming past and present* (London, Heinemann, 1961 reprint), p. 329.

<sup>44</sup> W. Cobbett, *Two Penny Trash*, 1 November 1830.

<sup>45</sup> G. Sturt, *Change in the village* (London, Caliban Books, reprint 1984), p.109.

<sup>46</sup> W. Cameron, S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), W. Tilley to Boxall family, letter No 25 16 September 1833 pp. 50-1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, F. Mellish to parents, letter No 102 8 November 1835 pp. 187-8.

<sup>48</sup> SHC P/22/2/42, 'Betchworth vestry minutes November 1832'.



discharge of their duty.”<sup>49</sup> George Rose was only released after being severely reprimanded and expressed “contrition” for his conduct.<sup>50</sup> Erickson subscribes to the view that by emigrating “an industrious man could not fail to make a living on an American farm in the early nineteenth century.”<sup>51</sup> The same can be said of Canada, for as Edward Longley wrote in 1835, “I am at liberty to better my condition should the opportunity occur.”<sup>52</sup> Simeon Titmouse claimed that “any stout labouring man with family may do better in this country for them than he can do at home.”<sup>53</sup>

### *Landowners*

Increasing numbers of agricultural labourers and their families were dependent in some degree on parish relief, especially in winter months. Many of the propertied classes alleged “receipt of relief was no longer regarded as a stigma by labouring men and that their desire to find independent employment was undermined by the parish aid available.”<sup>54</sup> The parliamentary select committee reports of 1817 and 1824 that considered poverty and labourers’ wages reflected this same attitude.<sup>55</sup> Many farmers complained to these committees that the able-bodied poor ate up their profits and that their fecklessness and improvidence, rather than inadequacy in their wages, was the real cause of their distress. The concern of the squire, farmer and parson was to keep labour obedient and cheap.<sup>56</sup> Similarly Matthew Martin, the assistant overseer of the parish of Godstone reported in 1833 that “the number employed by the parish in digging gravel, has a great tendency to beget idleness: and that number is increasing.”<sup>57</sup> Frimley vestry

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Erickson, *Leaving England*, pp.34–5.

<sup>52</sup> W. Cameron, S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers’ letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2000), E. Longley to W Mitchell, letter No 106 28 September 1835 pp.200–4.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, S. Titmouse to Jackson, letter No 22 11 September 1832 p.47.

<sup>54</sup> P. Horn, *Life and labour in rural England 1760–1850* (London, Hutchinson, 1987), p.90.

<sup>55</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Poor Laws VI 1817, and Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers’ Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824.

<sup>56</sup> G.E. Mingay and J. D. Chambers, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750–1880* (London, B.T. Batsford, 1966), p. 146

<sup>57</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX, Question 37, Evidence M. Martin p.481c.

instructed parishioners employing labour to report any labourers turned away for “idleness or neglecting duty”. In December 1820 William Young was unable to work on the common because of inclement weather and applied to the vestry for relief.<sup>58</sup> The vestry agreed in his case but emphasized that in other cases, only “sober, industrious men” would receive relief and allowance for their families. At a meeting of the Bletchingley vestry it was made clear “if any pauper who works at a farm should leave his master without being discharged he shall not be allowed to go into the gravel pits or at any other work.”<sup>59</sup>

The prevailing attitude in rural England that able-bodied pauperism was due to indolence on the part of the pauper, and dependence on poor relief had weakened the labourers’ sense of independence, was also reflected in the attitude to emigration. According to this argument, only those people with an entrepreneurial spirit would be prepared to work and succeed, for the idle and feckless would not be attracted to emigration. The poor law commissioners believed:

“those who are dependent on the poor-rates, listless in seeking employment at home, render them unwilling to undergo the temporary privations and inconvenience which must attend their settlement in another country. Those persons are generally most forward to emigrate who are least corrupted by the abuses of the system of relief.”<sup>60</sup>

C.H. Maclean in 1834 commented that of those who left under the auspices of the Petworth scheme “the majority were considered men of excellent character and such

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<sup>58</sup> SHC 2589/3/4, ‘Frimley vestry 12 September 1818’.

<sup>59</sup> SHC P20/6/7, ‘Bletchingley vestry 20 February 1827’.

<sup>60</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 XXVII p.355.

as were likely to do well anywhere.”<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, a number of the Dorking emigrants:

“many of them had been chargeable and many were indifferent character. If chargeable paupers would go, the parish would be willing to raise a large sum; but this class of persons naturally prefer an idle but certain dependence on the parish at home, to an uncertain independence abroad, to be procured by industry and good conduct.”<sup>62</sup>

The letters written by the Longhurst and Cosens families, all of whom emigrated from Dorking, refute this claim and show these people were prepared to work hard to succeed. Rebecca Longhurst wrote to her mother in October 1832, shortly after arrival in Upper Canada that “we like the country very well and we have all plenty of work.”<sup>63</sup> Cornelius Cosens added “I can earn plenty of money here at any work.”<sup>64</sup>

#### *Individual autonomy and independence*

In southern England, dependency on poor relief in the 1820s allowed little opportunity of social advancement or independence, whereas in Canada there were new opportunities. It is evident that individual autonomy and social advancement were key issues that can be identified in these letters in association with the descriptions of independence. George Hills wrote to his parents, “you may be satisfied that we have bettered our condition by

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<sup>61</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 574A .

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), R. Longhurst to mother, letter 4 October 1832 pp. 25–7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, C. Cosins to Mr Bartlett, letter 7 October 1832 p.14.

coming here.”<sup>65</sup> William Taylor Upton echoed this sentiment in his letter written in 1832: “if trade is as bad as it was, anyone would do better in Canada for here anyone can soon gain independency.”<sup>66</sup> John Allen Tribe from Chiddingfold claimed “this is fine country, and a free country you can go where you like here and no one to hinder you.”<sup>67</sup> In Canada, it was reported that “those who have resolution for a year or two or three at most, then become independent and have the sufficiency to support the largest family.”<sup>68</sup> Timothy Trusler advised people to “come to this country if you wish to be independent of any other man.”<sup>69</sup>

### *The end of the old social order*

At the end of the eighteenth century, much of English society consisted of a pyramid of ranks and orders bound by “an amalgam of reasonably well understood reciprocal rights and duties with its social cement.”<sup>70</sup> This model of rural society, in which labourers and landlords possessed a common culture, was one that Cobbett supported. By the 1820s writers bemoaned the weakening of old attachments and relationships. Both John Clare and Cobbett lamented the end of the old social order, but this was different from the recurring “generational tendency to bemoan a more harmonious rural past.”<sup>71</sup> Between 1820 and 1824 Clare wrote *“The Parish: A Satire”* in which he expressed his sadness at the end of the old social order of the farmers and labourers working and living alongside each other. He identified a breakdown in the social order, partly because farmers “hate their farms and ape the country squires.”<sup>72</sup>

<sup>65</sup> W. Cameron, S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), G.Hills to unknown, letter No 16 5 August 1832 pp.32–3.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, W. Taylor Upton to George Warren letter No 26 16 September 1832 pp. 51–2.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, John Allen Tribe to George Fielder letter No 36 14 October 1832 p. 66.

<sup>68</sup> Vance, ‘Advancement Moral’ p.153.

<sup>69</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), T. Trusler to W. Luff, letter No 105 8 February 1836 p.198.

<sup>70</sup> W.A. Armstrong, ‘The position of the labourer in rural society’ in G. E. Mingay (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales VI* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.821.

<sup>71</sup> Snell, ‘The social’, p.165.

<sup>72</sup> J.W. Tibble and A. Tibble, *John Clare selected poems* (London, J.M. Dent and Sons, 1984), p.140.

William Cobbett also commented on the practice of farmers withdrawing from labour and no longer being identified with their workers. He wrote a great deal on the demise of the free and easy relationship between master and worker. He complained that “since the pianofortes and the parlour bells and carpets come into the farmhouse the lot of the labourers had been growing worse and worse.”<sup>73</sup> The growing luxury of the farmers and the widening social gulf between them, Cobbett blamed for the decline of the common meal at the common table of farmer and labourer, which symbolised the old system.<sup>74</sup> By the 1830s this developing division between labourer and farmer was also recognised by the Bishop of Bath and Wells:

“the farmer and his men labour together and, by consequence, labour more abundantly. They partake often of the same meal: and the one finds his own interest and comfort increased in upholding the interest and comfort of the other. Whereas the little farmers are now a class becoming gradually more and more diminished in number. The interests of the employer and of those employed are no longer the same: the bond which united them, the possessor and the cultivator of the soil, is unpropitiously severed and torn asunder.”<sup>75</sup>

These were not isolated comments, for English popular ballads of the time reflect this souring of social relations. “*The New Fashioned Farmer*” was one of the most widely printed labourer protest songs of the early nineteenth century, where the farmer was seen to have rejected social, cultural and economic identification with the ploughman.

At the kitchen table formerly the farmer would sit,  
And carve for all his servants’ good pudding and meat.

<sup>73</sup> W. Cobbett, *Political Register*, 22 December 1832.

<sup>74</sup> W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (London, Penguin, 1985 reprint), pp.227–9.

<sup>75</sup> H.G. Law, *Remarks on Present Distress of Poor* (London, 1830).

But now all in the dining room so closely they are box'd in.

But if a servant was to peep it would be thought a sin.<sup>76</sup>

In England it appears that the commonality between labourers and farmers was being lost. As a result, the rural agricultural worker experienced a growing feeling of isolation. The traditional rights of the poor were being eroded and this resulted in a breakdown of the relationship between labourer and employer.<sup>77</sup> Snell notes the deterioration in social relations in southern agriculture with the changing conditions in employment and wage payments for the poor.<sup>78</sup> Discussion of this decline became widespread from the 1820s onwards and can be found in pamphlets and parliamentary reports on agriculture, poor laws, vagrancy and crime. Magistrate, Henry Drummond reported in 1824:

“where cottages are in the hands of farmers they always prohibit the labourers from keeping a pig and claim the produce of the apple trees and of the vine which usually covers the house. Landowners have pulled down cottages because they yield no rent without distraining, which gentlemen are unwilling to do; and again the farmers have been very anxious to get the gardens to throw into their fields.”<sup>79</sup>

### *The decline of farm service*

From the 1780s in the south and east there was a decline in farm service, that is, the hiring of unmarried people to live in with the farmers.<sup>80</sup> By the beginning of the nineteenth century, many farm labourers had become essentially casual labourers hired

<sup>76</sup> Madden Collection of Ballads 15 (1), Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

<sup>77</sup> E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, Penguin, 1991), pp.185–258.

<sup>78</sup> Snell, *Annals*, p.69.

<sup>79</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, Report H. Drummond p. 47.

<sup>80</sup> Snell, 'The social', p.166.

and dismissed at will, which further weakened the ties that had traditionally bound the farm servant to his employer. In 1828 the select committee on parochial settlement urged the abolition of casual hiring “to revive that almost forgotten but excellent practice of domesticating the agricultural labourer in the establishment of his employer and thereby improve the moral feelings, industrious habits and real comforts of the poorer classes.”<sup>81</sup> William Cobbett commented that in a farm house he visited in Reigate in 1825 “there was hardly any family in that house where formerly there were in all probability from ten to fifteen boys and maids, and, which was the worst of all, there was a parlour.”<sup>82</sup> The decline of farm service recognised by Cobbett as contributing significantly to the deterioration of social relations between farmer and labourer, was not universally accepted, as not all who lived-in were well treated. Snell observes the ending of farm service in the south was only a contributory factor to class distrust,<sup>83</sup> whereas Wells believes that Cobbett painted ‘far too rosy a picture’ of living-in, and gives examples of farmers and their wives exercising “tyrannical powers in their households.”<sup>84</sup>

The erosion of boarding-in servants had profound implications for English agricultural labourers, especially at a time of increasing economic hardship. Many labourers as consumers were now dependent on the market for food, fuel, clothing and housing and were no longer protected against rising prices. This greatly affected their living standard and made them more dependent on the parish for relief. Kidd has also identified that after 1815, the increasing dependence of the rural labourer on daily paid farm work increased their poverty.<sup>85</sup> Cobbett asked the question, “Why do not farmers now feed and lodge their work people as they did formerly”? He then answered “because they cannot keep them upon so little as they give them in wages. This is the real case of the change.”<sup>86</sup> As

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<sup>81</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Law of Parochial Settlements IV 1828 p.1.

<sup>82</sup> Cobbett, *Rural*, p. 226.

<sup>83</sup> Snell, ‘Deferential bitterness’, p.167.

<sup>84</sup> R. Wells, (2000) ‘The Moral Economy of the English countryside’, in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest Crowds Conflict and Authority*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000), p.222, and Snell, *Annals*, p.222.

<sup>85</sup> Kidd, *State Society*, p. 14.

<sup>86</sup> W. Cobbett, *Political Register* 20 October 1825.

Mingay has noted, "the fall in prices and glut of labour combined to give a fatal blow to living-in, especially in the south of England."<sup>87</sup>

Of course, in Canada labour was at a premium and boarding-in of labourers was common and with it a much greater sense of equality. In Upper Canada it was usual for farmers to have hired help for the year and it was common practice for employers to provide labouring families with housing. Ann and Charles Cosens wrote that "the working man is thought just as much of as his master, we are not obliged to set down to a piece of bread and hard cheese. The table is at all the time loaded like as though, there was feasting."<sup>88</sup> This is reflected in William Voice's letter: "Father is working at the squire's and John and Trap and they have their dinner every day along with the squire, and daughter sits down after they have done to the same."<sup>89</sup> George Hills noted "farmers and labourers all sit at one table, here we get 5s per day English money in harvest and be boarded."<sup>90</sup>

### *Social isolation*

The letters from Canada confirm that in England many labourers had felt a growing sense of alienation and social isolation in the face of the hostility and disapproval of the propertied classes and the restrictions imposed on them. French and Barry have observed the importance of identity, formation and agency in society that was influenced by the experience of constraint.<sup>91</sup> Repeatedly, the letters emphasise that "forms of self-presentation or action were limited by the social roles available to individuals, and by a strong awareness of the unequal distribution of power. In December 1835, after being in Canada for eighteen months, George Coleman wrote "I am still at work for the same

<sup>87</sup> G.E. Mingay, *A social history of the English countryside* (London, Routledge, 1990), p.96.

<sup>88</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), C. & A. Cosens to family, letter No 66 31 March 1833 pp. 112–4.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, W. Voice to Mary Elliot, letter No 98 27 October 1834 pp.169–73.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, G. Hills to unknown, letter No 16 5 August 1832 pp.32–3.

<sup>91</sup> H. French and J. Barry (eds), 'Introduction' in *Identity and agency*, p.28.



master that I began to work for the second day after I arrived, and not one angry word has passed between us as yet – something different from being discharged twice in a fortnight. I speak my mind here the same as I did in England but the masters in this country love to hear the truth.”<sup>92</sup> These sentiments are highly visible in the emigrant letters. When Thomas Adsett wrote, he commented “we do not do here as they do in England. I am a mowing grass but we do not sit under the hedge to eat a bit of bread and cheese but go indoors and have the best that the country affords.”<sup>93</sup> In 1833 George Carver commented, “it is no use of high spirited farmers wishing to come out to this country for they will not get their servants to wait upon them as at home and to sit down at a second table to eat their crumbs. The servant is made equal with his master in all aspects of that kind and not treated as a great many of the light headed farmers at home treat them.”<sup>94</sup> Richard Neal claimed that “the people are all of one sort, their servants lives with their masters and they gets good wages.”<sup>95</sup> William and Charlotte Williard noted this division in English farm life: “They don’t put up dinners in this country but they dine along with the masters and mistresses, as you call them in England, but they will not be called so here they are equals like and if hired to anybody they call them their employers.”<sup>96</sup> Henry Heasan wrote “Jack is as good as his master here. Masters are glad to get servants, no running after masters.”<sup>97</sup> In 1836 Mary and Edward Burch commented “I should like to hear of my old master, tell him this is a good place for farmers but they must not think to do here as they do at home, telling men if they do not like it they may go, for the masters here must humble more to the men than the men to the master.”<sup>98</sup> William and Jane More stated “we like the country much, as labouring

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, G. Coleman to J Marten, letter No 103 17 December 1835 pp.188–90.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, Adsett to friends, letter No 61 4 March 1833 p.107.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, G. Carver to parents, letter No 87 18 August 1833 pp.148–9.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, R. Neal to friends, letter No 5 20 July 1832 pp.16–8.

<sup>96</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), W. & C. Willard to Mrs Wolgar letter 26 August 1832 pp. 15–22.

<sup>97</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), H. Heasan to H. Heasman, letter No 96 19 October 1834 pp.166–7.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, M. and E. Burch to G Burch, letter No 107 13 April 1836 pp.204–5.

people are much more comfortable and are more looked upon here.”<sup>99</sup> All these comments show more favourable social relations in Canada.

### *Individual autonomy*

Charlotte Erickson in her study of emigrant letters identifies a “longing for leisure” and suggests that in the early nineteenth century it was an important motive for emigration to the United States.<sup>100</sup> Michael Vance has studied the letters of a group of impoverished Glasgow artisans who left Scotland for Canada in 1820. He believes it would be wrong to conclude that the Canadian emigrants were writing of a world and a promise of complete freedom from work on a par with landed aristocrats but some leisure, along with individual autonomy, could be achieved in Canada.<sup>101</sup> George Hills wrote “we work here from sunrise to sunset but we don’t work so hard as we do at home. We rest through the day very often, they are not particular here about losing a little time as they are at home.” The letters also reveal that a measure of competency could be achieved by access to common land, enabling those of little means to hunt, fish, graze animals, cut timber and glean after harvest.<sup>102</sup>

### *Access to land*

In England, the issue of access to land for the labouring rural poor, together with the game laws and the excise taxes, caused a great deal of tension and ill feeling between rich and poor. In particular the rural poor suffered as a result of enclosure. For most cottagers, enclosure meant not only the loss of land on which to grow crops, but also a decline in the ownership of livestock, the loss of a cow or pig. It seems clear in southern

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, W. and J. Moore to W. Moore (Snr), letter No 89 5 September 1833 pp.151–2.

<sup>100</sup> Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*, p.28.

<sup>101</sup> Vance, ‘Advancement Moral’, p.155.

<sup>102</sup> Vickers, ‘Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 47 (1990) 13.

England that small farmers and even labourers were able to sustain agricultural undertakings by the use of commons and by sub-letting small plots of lands for planting.<sup>103</sup> Jeremy Burchardt supports the Hammonds' view that enclosure had a serious effect on the income of the poor through "the loss of the minor rights of common whether exercised legally or illegally."<sup>104</sup> Snell also notes the enclosure movement was another factor "aggravating social ill-feeling", and resulted in higher poor relief costs.<sup>105</sup>

In Dorking some loss of common land had occurred in 1814, when the manor of Milton was granted to Robert Barclay, who enclosed "part of the waste of this manor of Milton Heath."<sup>106</sup> Many cottagers lost grazing rights and the right to collect wood that provided fuel for heat and cooking and this meant they became completely reliant on waged labour. This was "paralleled by their dependency on it as consumers, for food, fuel, clothing and housing."<sup>107</sup> Wales observed the minority who could mobilize rights of pasture were significantly less likely to burden the parish.<sup>108</sup> The Bishop of Bath and Wells, writing in 1830, addressed the issue of the disappearance of English common land. "From these commons the poor man received great and substantial benefit, they afforded pasture to his domestic animals and fuel for his hearth. Now all these advantages are swallowed up in the allotments of the large proprietors and nothing is at present possessed by the poor man, which is an equivalent for what he has lost."<sup>109</sup> Charles Jerram of Chobham estimated access to the common for the labourer was worth about £2 a year for firing alone.<sup>110</sup> Majendie confirmed that the enclosure of wasteland in Lingfield in 1809 had "been injurious to the poor." Here they had gathered their fuel, kept cows, sheep and pigs

<sup>103</sup> M. Reed, 'The peasantry of nineteenth century England a neglected class?', *History Workshop Journal*, 18 (1984) 53–76.

<sup>104</sup> J. Burchardt, *The allotment movement in England 1793–1873* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2002), p.9, and J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700–1820* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.158–84.

<sup>105</sup> Snell, 'Deferential bitterness', p.167, and Snell, *Annals*, pp.138–227.

<sup>106</sup> SHC 192/2/2, 'Manor of Milton, Manorial Court Records 1814'.

<sup>107</sup> Wells, 'The moral economy', p. 211.

<sup>108</sup> T. Wales, 'Poverty, poor relief and the life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth century Norfolk', in R. Smith (ed), *Land, kinship and life-cycle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), pp. 370–8.

<sup>109</sup> H.G. Law, *Remarks on Present Distress of Poor* (London, 1830).

<sup>110</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX, Evidence C. Jerram Question 10 p.477a.

but now “they could no longer keep stock and their lands fell into the occupation of the adjoining farmers.”<sup>111</sup> Hindle has also noted in Geddington Chase, Northamptonshire, forest commons not only provided pasture but also “rich reserves of nuts, berries, honey game and fuel.”<sup>112</sup> Humphries recently has shown the value for the poor of a wide range of “makeshift activities” including grazing rights, cow, pig and geese keeping and fuel collection.<sup>113</sup>

At the same time, the English courts were anxious to stop illegal grazing of animals on land previously designated common land. In 1825 an entry in the Milton manor court rolls records that, John Bartlett, a blacksmith and farmer, and Richard Chitty, wheelwright, were fined for “turning out and depasturing their sheep and cattle on the common called Milton Heath neither have had in this manor any right of common.”<sup>114</sup> The Egham parish vestry told William Taplin that “if any of his cattle were found grazing on the parcel of wastelands” the cattle would be impounded.<sup>115</sup> The Egham vestry also feared that Windsor Great Park and the unenclosed remains of Bagshot Heath “held out great temptation to poaching and idleness, that the parish had to contend against.”<sup>116</sup> In 1824 Henry Drummond reported that in some Surrey parishes where cottage rents were high “the poor have built themselves turf huts on the wastes. Farmers have pulled these down and “they will not relieve them nor give them work unless they give up their huts.”<sup>117</sup>

Arthur Young (1773) and Nathaniel Kent (1775) stressed the importance of the poor being given the provision of small lots of land to prevent the progressive degradation of the

<sup>111</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C. Maclean p.175A.

<sup>112</sup> S. Hindle, (2003) ‘Not by bread only?’ Common right parish relief and endowed charity in a forest economy c1600–1800’ in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The poor in England 1700–1850 An economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003), pp.39–75.

<sup>113</sup> J. Humphries, ‘Enclosures common rights and women: The proletarianisation of families in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries’, *Journal of Economic History*, 50 (1990) 17–42.

<sup>114</sup> SHC 329/5/5, ‘Manor of Wescot, manorial court records 1825’.

<sup>115</sup> SHC 2516/6/2, ‘Egham parish vestry, report 3 November 1817’.

<sup>116</sup> SHC Acc 1493/2, ‘Egham parish vestry, entry October 1834’.

<sup>117</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers’ Wages and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment VI 1824, Report H. Drummond pp.46–8.

agricultural labourers.<sup>118</sup> In 1801 Young accepted that waste land was not found everywhere but he stressed the “principles of property are universal and the more they are encouraged amongst the poor, the less burthensome will they be found.”<sup>119</sup> Through his writings William Cobbett continued to support radical agrarian reform. He asserted that there were “moral evils” against the rise of the large farms and that “we now have a few masters and a great number of slaves.”<sup>120</sup> Cobbett was deeply concerned the plight of the agricultural labourer whose conditions, he claimed, had deteriorated in post-war years and in his opinion the labourer’s life “which contains a compulsion to work without a moral possibility of saving something for old age is slavery.”<sup>121</sup> He thought the most important means of self-sufficiency was access to the soil, whether common land, a cottage garden or a smallholding, and believed if the labourer had access to land, it bred independence, self-reliance and resourcefulness. In 1833 Mr Thomas Drewitt, a substantial farmer in Surrey, agreed, writing in 1833 that giving labourers small pieces of ground has made “him less dependent upon the rate and more independent in his circumstances.”<sup>122</sup>

In Canada there was unrestricted access to vast tracts of land. In 1833 James and William Goldring wrote that “we can get firing for nothing here that is a fine thing.” Ann Thomas added that “there is one great comfort here, we have as much wood as we like to burn.”<sup>123</sup> Ann and Charles Cosens wrote that “there is plenty of very fine wood here without any expense, we can get it anywhere by cutting it.”<sup>124</sup> Cornelius Voice commented that “our cows and hogs cost nothing in the summer, they run in the woods

<sup>118</sup> A. Young, *Observations on the Present State of the Waste Lands of Great Britain* (London, W. Nicoll, 1773) and *Annals of Agriculture* (London, Kent, 1784), also *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (London, J. Dodsley, 1775)

<sup>119</sup> A. Young, *An inquiry into the propriety of applying wastes to the better maintenance and support of the poor with instances of the great effects which have attended their acquisition of property in keeping them from the parish even in the present scarcity* (Bury, J. Rackham, Angel Hill, 1801), p.13.

<sup>120</sup> W. Cobbett, *Political Register*, 26 May 1821.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Evidence T. Drewitt p. 479.

<sup>123</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2000), Ann Thomas to T. Puttock, letter No 37 15 October 1832 pp. 68–9.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, Ann and Charles Cosens to family, letter No 66 31 March 1833 pp. 112–4.

and keep themselves.”<sup>125</sup> There were also opportunities to combine wage labour with the possibility to cultivate enough land to feed a family.

To achieve a certain independence and self-sufficiency, the ownership of livestock was also important.<sup>126</sup> Arthur Young estimated the value of a cow to family at as much as 5s-6s a week.<sup>127</sup> More recently, Humphries has calculated that at the end of the eighteenth century the produce of a cow over a course of a year was worth almost half as much as the wages of a fully employed male agricultural labourer.<sup>128</sup> Many letters include detailed references to the number of animals that the emigrants had been able to buy and graze on rented land. George Hills, a labourer with a wife and six children, wrote in 1832 “I have bought a cow for £5 and a young sow for 12s 6d.”<sup>129</sup> A year later James Helyer acquired “a cow and calf for £5 7s and four hogs for about £4.”<sup>130</sup>

Some emigrants soon progressed to buying land in Canada, whereas in England this would have been impossible. In fact, Charles Cosens had rented Redland Farm and other lands in Dorking until April 1831, when he lost them. He left England in 1832, along with his wife and thirteen family members, under the auspices of the Dorking Emigration Scheme. The following year his son, Cornelius Cosens, wrote from Canada that “you may buy land very cheap here” and in 1839 he was able to report that his father had moved to Huron Tract and “they are on a farm of their own up there.”<sup>131</sup> William Phillips wrote to his mother and father in 1832, asking them to come to Canada “and bring uncle Carpenter with you, and he nor you will never repent coming here for I can get you both a

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, Cornelius Voice to family, letter No 101 20 September 1835 pp. 183–7.

<sup>126</sup> Snell, *Annals*, pp.174–6.

<sup>127</sup> Young, *An inquiry*, pp. 6–9, 14, 102.

<sup>128</sup> J. Humphries, ‘Enclosures common rights’ 17–42.

<sup>129</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers’ letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2000), G. Hills to unknown, No 16 letter 5 August 1832 pp.32–3.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, J. Helyer to Peter Scovell, No 90 letter 29 September 1833 pp. 152–3.

<sup>131</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), C. Cosens to Mr Barlett pp. 14–5 and W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers’ letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2000) C. Cosens to parents, letter No 141 28 September pp.295–7.

farm if you want one; and you can earn money enough in one year to pay for it yourself.”<sup>132</sup>

### *Poaching and game laws*

An increase in poaching reportedly occurred in England after 1815, coinciding with the increasing experience of hardship experienced by the rural agricultural worker. The select committee on criminal commitments and convictions concluded that “the low rate of wages and want of sufficient employment for the labourer was the main cause of the increase in rural crime”.<sup>133</sup> In the three years 1827–1830 one in seven of all criminal convictions in the country were convictions under the game laws. The number of persons convicted amounted to 8,502.<sup>134</sup> The Game Laws were bitterly resented and seen by many poor labourers as draconian. Poaching could supplement the labourers’ diet, and among many poor labourers there was the commonly held belief that poaching was justified, especially in time of want. At the 1833 Select Committee on Agriculture George Smallpiece, a farmer from Cobham, having been asked, “are they more given to poaching than formerly?” replied that “the young men between fifteen and twenty cannot be employed and they are obliged to do something because of lack of employment.”<sup>135</sup> The 1826–27 select committee calculated that poaching could supplement the income of the poor labourer at the rate, “1s per head partridge, 2s 6d pheasant and 2s–2s 6d hares.”<sup>136</sup>

The popular ballads of the 1820s and 1830s referred to poaching; in one ballad James Hawker explained, he helped himself to hog fodder and game because “poverty is the Mother of Invention...poverty made me poach.”<sup>137</sup> Cobbett wanted to see the game laws abolished, and reported on a case of a young man in Surrey cracking stones beside the

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, W. Phillips to parents, letter 11 29 July 1832 pp.25– 6.

<sup>133</sup> Select Committee on Criminal Commitments 1826–27, VI, pp.4–5.

<sup>134</sup> J. L. Hammond and B. Hammond, *The Village labourer 1760–1832* (London, Longman Green, reprint 1920), p.167.

<sup>135</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Evidence G. Smallpiece p.614.

<sup>136</sup> Select Committee on Criminal Commitments and Convictions VI 1826–27 p.7.

<sup>137</sup> G. Christian(ed), *James Hawker’s Journal : A Victorian Poacher* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978).

road. When asked by a gentleman how he survived on 2s 6d a week, he replied "I don't live upon it" said he. "How do you live then?" He replied "I poach, it is better to be hanged then to be starved to death."<sup>138</sup>

In Canada, where there were no anti-poaching measures, the emigrant letters reflect the resentment felt towards the English game laws. In 1832 John Worsfold wrote that "there is plenty of deer, rabbits, pheasants and pigeon to shoot, there is little danger of starving."<sup>139</sup> Charles Adsett commented, "here is plenty of pheasants and pigeons and deer that will weigh twenty stone" and John Allen Tribe reported "shooting anything as you see of wild fowl and there is plenty of deer."<sup>140</sup> William Pannell wrote that "we have plenty of game in America, plenty of deer and turkeys, pheasants, partridge and black squirrel and red squirrel."<sup>141</sup> With no fear of imprisonment, James and William Goldring stated that "we have nobody to run over us here and to order us out of their fields, we can take our gun and go a deer hunting when we likes."<sup>142</sup> William Spencer wrote of this freedom to hunt "there is more privileges here than is with you, we can fish and fowl as much as we please and none to make us afraid."<sup>143</sup> James Cooper noted in his letter that "there are no gamekeeper or water keepers here. Here is a river runs through the corner of my lot and plenty of fish in it: and here is wild deer and turkeys, pheasants, partridges and rabbits and anybody may kill them."<sup>144</sup>

<sup>138</sup> W. Cobbett, *Political Register*, 29 March 1823.

<sup>139</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), John Worsfold to parents, letter 15 December 1832, pp.35–8.

<sup>140</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), T. Adsett to T. Scutt, letter No 22 9 September 1832 p.46, and John Allen Tribe to G. Fielder, letter No 36 14 October 1832 pp.66–7.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, W. Pannell to parents, letter 14 October 1832, No 35 pp.64–6.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, James and William Goldring to T. Goldring, letter No 67 9 April 1833 pp.114–6.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, William Spencer to parents, letter No 125 10 November 1836 pp.238–41.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, James Cooper to family and friends, letter No 133 26 May 1832 pp.270–6.



*Excise taxes*

In the 1820s the British government followed a low tariff and high consumption tax policy, arguing that this was least damaging to British trade and commerce, even if the reliance on indirect taxation proved to be a heavy burden for the poor. Excise taxes were much commented on by Cobbett as a social evil, and he believed the weight of taxation on the poor was too great. He felt this dependence on indirect taxation had a detrimental effect on English society. "Farmers were not the authors of the mischief; and now they are compelled to shut the labourers out of their hoes and to pinch them in their wages in order to be able to pay their own taxes."<sup>145</sup> Duty was payable on certain manufactured goods, including leather, salt, candles, soap, malt and hops. It was therefore illegal to make one's own candles. In *Cottage Economy* William Cobbett gave clear instructions for making rush lights. He stressed that they were much cheaper and as good as candles. He believed that you could read "by rush lights as you can by the light of taxed candles."<sup>146</sup> In the same way, he was against the tax on sugar, claiming that without the tax "you would have sugar for 2½d instead of 7d."<sup>147</sup> The letters also commented on indirect taxation. In 1832 Thomas Adsett reported "there is little or no tax in Canada" and in 1833 James Helyer wrote that "there is one comfort enjoyed here that taxes are a mere trifle."<sup>148</sup> George Carver stated that "people can make their own candles, and soap without paying any duty."<sup>149</sup> In a similar vein, George Coleman observed in 1835 that "we make our candles soap and sugar we have no excise man to interrupt us."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides* p.228.

<sup>146</sup> W. Cobbett, *Cottage Economy* (London, Mills Jowett Mills, 1826).

<sup>147</sup> W. Cobbett, *Two Penny Trash* May 1831.

<sup>148</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000) T. Adsett to father, letter No 71 1833 pp. 121–23 and James Helyer to Peter Scovell, letter No 90 29 September 1833 pp.152–3.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, George Carver to parents, letter No 87 18 August 1833 pp.148–9.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, George Coleman to Mr J. Marten, letter No 103 17 December 1835 pp.188–90.

*Abundance of food*

In their letters, many emigrants also referred to the scarcity of food in England, compared to the abundance in Canada. Charlotte and William Willard claimed “you know we could hardly get a taste of meat in England but now we can roast a quarter of meat.”<sup>151</sup> John Worsfold, also from Dorking, commented that “I have everything that I want; I may have beef steaks or other meat for breakfast and what I like to drink.”<sup>152</sup> Charlotte Willard could have been writing from the personal experience of gleaning. “While to lease here for one good leaser could get a bushel of wheat a day, for they rake it in this country. There is no leasers, they let the hogs eat it.”<sup>153</sup> This indicates that in Canada food was plentiful, whereas in England traditionally gleaning was done by poor women and children who gathered up the ears of corn left by the reapers. A poor family might glean enough corn to keep them in bread for the winter. Peter King estimated the annual value of gleaning to labouring households at between three and fourteen per cent of yearly income.<sup>154</sup> Charlotte also comments, “I wish my poor father and friends was here, they would not want bread, I can assure you all.”<sup>155</sup> Thomas Adsett also commented on the abundance of food in Canada compared to England. “I wish that the poor people in England had the leavings of their table that goes to the dogs and hogs: they live better than most of the farmers in England.”<sup>156</sup>

<sup>151</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), C. Willard to Mrs Wolgar, letter 26 August 1832 pp.15–22.

<sup>152</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), John Worsfold to parents, letter No 48 1832 pp.83–4.

<sup>153</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), C. Willard to Mrs Wolgar, letter 26 August 1832 pp.15–22.

<sup>154</sup> P. King, (1991) ‘Customary rights and women's earnings: the importance of gleaning to the rural poor 1750–1850’ *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991) 461–76.

<sup>155</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Letters from the Dorking emigrants who went to Upper Canada* (London, J. and A. Arch, 1833), C. Willard to Mrs Wolgar, letter 26 August 1832 pp.15–22.

<sup>156</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers' letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), Thomas Adsett to Rev R. Risdale, letter No 49 21 December 1832 pp.87–8.

### Conclusion

These letters home provide the historian with valuable insights into life in England at a time when the emigrants departed for Canada. Many day labourers in England by the 1820s had found themselves socially segregated and unprotected against unemployment and price fluctuations. There is evidence of a demoralized rural labour force dependent on parish work, and a growing resentment towards farmers who were not only their employers but were also those who “controlled the vestry, made poor law policy and took decisions respecting individual claimants.”<sup>157</sup> The letters reflect the low wages, the grievances connected with under-employment and the isolation felt by many labourers in England. When they compare their standard of living in Canada to what they have left behind in England they highlight the major concerns of the poor labourers back at home. They enable the historian to glimpse into the rural world of the poor and gain an insight into the conditions in England that had driven them to emigrate. Most of those who left on the treacherous journey across the Atlantic never returned. As George Hills wrote, “Dear father and mother, we left you almost broken–hearted, but you may be satisfied that we have bettered our condition by coming here.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> R. Wells (2003) ‘Historical trajectories: English social welfare systems, rural riots, popular politics, agrarian trade unions, and allotment provision, 1793–1896’, *Southern History*, 25 (2003) 89.

<sup>158</sup> W. Cameron S. Haines and M. McDougall Maude (eds), *English immigrant voices labourers’ letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal, McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2000), George Hills to unknown, letter No 16 5 August 1832 p.33.

## Chapter Eight

### The Swing Riots In Surrey

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In 1830, agricultural protest was not a new phenomenon. In the sixteenth century enclosure had led to hedge-breaking incidents in southern England, and localised unrest had occurred during the grain famine of 1795 and 1800. In 1822 labourers attacked threshing machines in parts of East Anglia. Wells suggests that the riots of 1830 “conformed with the precedents set thirty or forty years previously.”<sup>1</sup> The outbreaks of violence took the form of machine breaking, arson attacks, wage riots, threatening letters and “inflammatory handbills” which were used to exert pressure on landowners to raise wages, get rid of threshing machines and end rural unemployment. As Hobsbawn and Rudé have commented, it was this multiformity that was the remarkable feature of these riots.<sup>2</sup> The so called “Captain Swing Riots” of 1830 alarmed all levels of society as the unrest spread across southern and central England. The rioters attacked the same targets, made the same demands and used the same methods in county after county.

#### *Agricultural depression*

The riots were concentrated in the arable farming areas of the south and east of England, where real wages were at their lowest. In the north of England, the position of the labourer was far better. The rising in Surrey took place against the background of the increasing pauperisation of labourers. This is evident from the increasing demands for poor relief made to the overseers of the poor that have been discussed earlier. The burden of unemployment was concentrated in the winter months when “the anxieties of

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<sup>1</sup> R.Wells, ‘The development of the English rural proletariat and social protest 1700-1850’, in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds), *Class conflict and protest in the English countryside 1700–1800* (London, Cass, 1990), p.30.

<sup>2</sup> E. Hobsbawn and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, Readers Union Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), p.97.

labourers were at their peak.”<sup>3</sup> Anything which deprived them of work at that time was likely to be regarded with hostility. This explains the opposition to the threshing machines that replaced manual threshing, the traditional winter labour for the months from November to January. William Cobbett commented that labourers “know that one threshing machine takes wages from ten men.”<sup>4</sup> A writer from Norwich wrote:

“Farmers will, upon reflection recognise the expediency of abolishing that labour supplanting engine, the threshing machine. That they have always excited a feeling of exasperation among the peasantry ....by the disuse of threshing machines more valuable property may be saved from destruction and the necessitous labourer presented with the mean of employments.”<sup>5</sup>

As E. L. Jones noted, “the conjunction of a growing population with little alternative to agricultural work and the introduction of the threshing machine – much the earliest machine of any importance in English farming – resulted in chronic winter unemployment and distress in southern England during the nineteenth century.”<sup>6</sup>

In Surrey some threshing machines were being used, predominately in the Guildford and Godalming area.<sup>7</sup> By November 1830, in the midst of the rural unrest, the press reported that “there is scarcely a farmer in the neighbourhood employing a machine to whom rumour has not served a threatening notice.”<sup>8</sup> In Surrey, as in other counties, it was common practice for farmers to destroy their machines before the rioters appeared in the area. In the vicinity of Colnbrook “several farmers in the neighbourhood have removed their threshing machines from their premises” and, according to G. Smallpiece, farmers

<sup>3</sup> P. Horn, *The rural world 1780–1850 : social change in the English countryside* (Hutchinson, London, 1980), p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> W. Cobbett, ‘Trial King v Cobbett 7 July 1831 Court of the King’s Bench Guildhall.

<sup>5</sup> *County Chronicle* 30 November 1830.

<sup>6</sup> E.L. Jones, *Season and Prices: The role of the weather in English agricultural history* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1964), p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> W. Stevenson, ‘A general view of the agriculture of Surrey 1813,’ *The Review and Abstract County Reports to the Board of Agriculture York*, Thomas Wilson and Sons, 1818), p. 375.

<sup>8</sup> *Windsor and Eton Express* 15 November 1830.

around Cobham and Guildford had broken their threshing machines before “the rioting took place to prevent visits of machine breakers.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, The *Chronicle*’s Chertsey correspondent reported, “there is not a single instance of a threshing machine ever having been used by any gentleman or farmer in the parish.”<sup>10</sup> Significantly, even in regions like Surrey where the threshing machine was of no serious significance, the threshing machine had become a symbol of the poor agricultural worker’s misery and a focal point for dissatisfaction rather than a major cause of it.<sup>11</sup> According to Holland, the fundamental cause of the riots was perceived to be the use of the threshing machine by farmers.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Reasons for the growing dissatisfaction*

Contemporaries also suggested that other factors contributed to the increasing hardship endured by the agricultural labourer. On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1830 Henry Drummond of Albury Park wrote to Viscount Melbourne concerning the unrest in the southern counties, pointing out that he did not think that the provincial magistrates could “put an end to the disaffection which prevails, except such as tend to the extinction of the public debt or in the meantime to the shifting of the pressure of taxation from the lower to the higher classes.”<sup>13</sup> An editorial in *The Herald* urged a change of policy, namely “the reduction of the national taxes of rents and tithes and, above all, parliamentary reform. These measures and no other than these measures... will save our beloved country from a convulsion.”<sup>14</sup> *The Chronicle* also advocated economic remedies, demanding the removal of taxes on essential commodities and the repeal of the malt tax.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Windsor and Eton Express* 15 November 1830, and Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture 1833 V Evidence G. Smallpiece 10 July p. 613.

<sup>10</sup> *The Chronicle* 13 November 1830.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, *Season and prices*, p. 64

<sup>12</sup> M. Holland, ‘The Captain Swing project’ in M. Holland (ed), *Swing Unmasked*, (Milton Keynes, FACHRS Publications, 2005), p.1.

<sup>13</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘letter 1 September 1830’.

<sup>14</sup> *The Herald* 11 December 1830.

<sup>15</sup> *The Chronicle* 30 November 1830.

Conversely, A.G. Davidson, a farmer in Bletchingley, was of the opinion that “the magistracy in the districts where they commenced [fires] have much to answer for.”<sup>16</sup> Drummond wrote to William Bray of Shere on 25 September 1830, attributing the high price of cottage rents and “the obstruction that is thrown in the way of erecting dwellings and the refusal of farmers to let them have small plots of that very land which the farmers say they cannot profitably cultivate” as another reason for the unrest.<sup>17</sup> The *Windsor and Eton Express* also reported “that the premises of bailiffs and overseers are chiefly attacked or menaced” because large farms required a bailiff, and this expense was seen as contributing to a rise in the price of produce.<sup>18</sup> The article pointed out that “the farmer ought to manage his own land and be with his labourers himself.”<sup>19</sup> It also criticised a landlord who took a farm “for amusement,” a reference to gentlemen farmers who were blamed for bringing desolation to the countryside. *The Herald* offered another solution to the unrest, namely, finding jobs for the labourers, claiming that “the great panacea for the present distress of the agricultural poor is to be found in giving them employment and from no other source can permanent benefit arise.”<sup>20</sup>

This sentiment was not mirrored at a meeting between the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Arden, and sixty-three of the magistrates for Surrey who met at the Spread Eagle Inn in Epsom on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1830. It is evident that the magistrates were alarmed by the disturbances in the county. They reported that if the “late diabolical proceedings of incendiaries” continued and the large meetings of people “assembled together under pretence of demanding increase in wages and a reduction of rent and tithes” do not disperse, they will be prosecuted.<sup>21</sup> The meeting recommended that all magistrates

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<sup>16</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Bletchingley Reply Question 53 p.480e.

<sup>17</sup> SHC Surrey/111/66 E list 46, ‘letter 25 September 1830’.

<sup>18</sup> *Windsor and Eton Express* 13 November 1830.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *The Herald* 20 November 1830.

<sup>21</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘20 November 1830’.

swear in special constables to preserve law and order. This was seen as necessary because there were a relatively small number of troops available. Press reporters were also refused admittance to the meeting for “it was hinted that the magistrates might have communications to make among themselves respecting the state of the county, of a character too alarming to make a disclosure prudent.”<sup>22</sup> Although sympathy was expressed “with the sufferings which the circumstances of the times may have imposed on many of the working classes of society,” no additional measures were proposed to alleviate the distress.<sup>23</sup>

### *Under-employment and inadequate wages*

For the labourers, it was a rising against unemployment and the shortcomings of the poor laws that seemed unable to provide sufficient relief. William Cobbett had warned that the agricultural depression, which brought under-employment and inadequate wages in its wake, would cause problems. Thousands of agricultural labourers “ended up in parish employ, subject to penny-pinching dictatorial vestries”<sup>24</sup> In November 1830 Cobbett wrote of the hardship endured by the agricultural labourer, “the great and general cause is the extreme poverty of the working people; or in other words the starving state in which they are in.”<sup>25</sup> By the mid 1820s Cobbett began to prophesy a major rural rebellion and by 1828 he was dating it to the winter of 1830–1. He insisted that his readers acknowledge that the unrest was not a recent phenomenon, but the result of long-standing grievances. I. Dyck identified the labourers’ grievances as the demands for higher wages, the destruction of threshing machines, an end to hired overseers, direct access to the land, reform of parliament and the granting of poor relief as a right and not as a privilege.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *The Times* 22 November 1830.

<sup>23</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘20 November 1830’.

<sup>24</sup> R. Wells, ‘Rural rebels in southern England in the 1830s’ in C. Emlsey and J. Walvin (eds), *Artisans peasants and proletarians 1760–1860* (London, Croom Helm, 1985), p. 129.

<sup>25</sup> W. Cobbett, *Two Penny Trash*, 1 November 1830.

<sup>26</sup> I. Dyck, ‘William Cobbett and the rural radical platform’, *Social History*, 18 (1993) 196.



After the poor harvest of 1829, cold, hunger and lack of work formed the lot of the labourers during the following winter and early spring, and the prospect of another hard winter was a very grim proposition. In reply to the Rural Queries, R.G. Lorraine identified “the want of employment and inadequate wages” as reasons for discontent in the hamlet of Wallington. Henry Drummond was one of the few large landowners in Surrey to admit publicly that the primary cause of the discontent “is the settled antipathy existing between the labourers and farmers.”<sup>27</sup> In rural Surrey thousands of agricultural labourers had become dependent on outwork provided by the parish. Cobbett identified the employment of paupers in parish-sponsored work-schemes as degrading and produced a petition against the use of labourers as “beasts of burden.”<sup>28</sup> There were others like Cobbett who recognised the inadequacy of such expedients. Reverend J Clementin wrote to Sir Robert Peel on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1830, pointing out that those who are compelled to “work on the highways or other slavish employments during the winter season for half the necessary wages ... have come to the determination of not submitting to this kind of oppression any longer.”<sup>29</sup> C. Collins of Sittingbourne agreed “the labourer although entitled to a just return for the sweat of his brow has been in too many cases denied his due and beaten down to the lowest fraction.”<sup>30</sup> A poster distributed in 1830 endorsed with these sentiments, pointing out to farmers that inadequate wages were being paid. “The labourer is worthy of his hire. I do not call upon you to listen to wild and unreasonable demands but I recommend you at least to follow the example of those farmers who deal justly by their labourers.”<sup>31</sup> The agricultural writer, Mr Poulett Scrope, echoed this sentiment and stressed “wages and parish allowance must be immediately raised.”<sup>32</sup> On

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<sup>27</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Wallington Hamlet Reply Question 53 p.488e and Albury Reply to Question 53 p.474e.

<sup>28</sup> W. Cobbett, *Petition to the ratepayers of Kensington*: (Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge, 1828),

<sup>29</sup> NA HO 44/22, ‘11 November 1830’.

<sup>30</sup> NA HO 44/22, ‘1 November 1830’.

<sup>31</sup> NA HO 44/23, ‘Poster 1830’.

<sup>32</sup> *The County Chronicle* 14 December 1830.

1 December 1830, four months after the start of the unrest in Surrey, Drummond warned Lord Melbourne that:

“the people are quiet now because ... they have gained their object of a general increase of the means of subsistence either from their employers or from the overseers....His Majesty will have been greatly misinformed if he has been advised that the present is a passing or temporary state of things, or that any measures will subdue it except such as tend to extinctions of the public debt, or in the meantime to the shifting of pressure of taxation from the lower to the higher classes.”<sup>33</sup>

He was right, for the outbreaks of violence in Surrey continued spasmodically until the winter of 1832. The initial response of the parishes had been to increase relief payments (see Table 8.1) with the expectation that it would bring order to the parishes, but this did not happen.

Table 8.1 *Total Expenditure Poor Relief In Surrey 1829–1834*

Year Ending Easter #	Total Expenditure On Poor Relief In Surrey (£000)
1829–1830	£265.5
1830–1831	£265.4
1831–1832	£283.3
1832–1833	£278.4
1833–1834	£261.5

# Year end 25<sup>th</sup> March

Source: Money expended for maintenance of the poor in every parish in England 1829–34 Sess. 1835, (444) vol. 47

<sup>33</sup> NA HO 52/10, 'letter 1 December 1830'.

In 1830 Nassau Senior, argued that wages for the labourer “are not a matter of contract but a matter of right that they depended not on the value of the labourer’s services, but on the extent of his wants or his expectations.”<sup>34</sup> In 1830 the government of the Duke of Wellington was not sympathetic to this plea. In fact, the government denied the existence of long-term agricultural distress, only accepting the temporary nature of distress resulting from several bad seasons. On 4 February the Lord Chancellor read to both Houses of Parliament an address from the King:

“His Majesty feels assured that you will concur with him in assigning to the effect of unfavourable seasons and to the operation of other causes which are beyond the reach of legislative control or remedy.”<sup>35</sup>

Privately, however, in a correspondence between Lord Grey and his son Lord Howick, they observed that they were unable to account for the way in which the labouring population managed to make a living from wages and relief payments.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand Nassau Senior, in his three lectures on the state of wages and the causes and remedies of the present disturbance, ascribed the Swing riots to the maladministration of the poor law system in 1830.

### *The outbreak of violence*

The disturbances in Surrey were neither so widespread, nor were they marked with the same intensity of discontent, which characterised the disturbances in Kent and Sussex. In November 1830 the magistrates of Surrey had declared “the districts of Woking and

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<sup>34</sup> N. Senior quoted in P. Dunkley, *The crisis of the old poor law in England 1795–1834* (New York, Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> The Mirror of Parliament IV 1830 4 February p. 2 .

<sup>36</sup> Grey papers University of Durham Box 25/2 , ‘Lord Howick/Lord Grey: letter 6 January 1830; Lord Grey/Lord Howick 8 January 1830’.

Blackheath and most of those on the borders of Sussex and Hampshire are the chief scenes of discontent and outrage.”<sup>37</sup> It must be remembered that this was November 1830 and the disturbances continued into 1832. At the same time, one should not underestimate the unrest in the county, especially as it is now possible to gain a more complete picture of the pattern of disturbances there.<sup>38</sup> Home Office reports and newspaper reports for the years 1830–1832 record 65 reported incidents of disturbances in Surrey (see Table 8.4), considerably more than the 29 incidents cited by Hobsbawn and Rudé.<sup>39</sup> For Surrey, the breakdown shows that incendiarism was the main crime and there were no recorded incidents of machine breaking, although it is known some threshing machines were dismantled by farmers before the riots.

Table 8.2 *Principal Crimes In Surrey 1830–1832*

Incendiarism	Machine Breaking	Threatening Letters	Food Riots	Tithe Meeting (Riot)	Shooting	March	Animal Poison
48	0	7	5	2	1	1	1

Source: J. Hill ‘Swing riots in Surrey’ in M. Holland (ed), *Swing Unmasked the agricultural riots of 1830 to 1832 and their wider implications* (Milton Keynes, FACHRS Publications, 2005) p.33.

The FACHRS Swing project has recently completed a national survey and has identified 3,283 incidents (see Table 8.3). A full listing shows that the principal crime committed was incendiarism or attempted incendiarism to farms, and this was also the case in Surrey.

<sup>37</sup> *The Times* 22 November 1830.

<sup>38</sup> J. Hill, ‘Swing riots in Surrey’ in M. Holland (ed), *Swing Unmasked* (Milton Keynes, FACHRS Publications, 2005), pp. 26-61 and J. Hill and M. James chart incidents of unrest in Surrey pp.33–8.

<sup>39</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing* appendix 1 pp. 312–58 they did recognise research into local records might revise the number of incidents

Table 8. 3 *Principal crimes of the Swing Riots*

Offence	Total	Offence	Total
Animal Maiming	76	Machine Breaking (threshing)	539
Malicious Killing Of Livestock	9	Machine Breaking (other agricultural machinery)	47
Anonymous Threatening Letters	272	Murder	1
Assaults On Poor Law Officials	25	Poor Law Riot	19
Attempted Incendiarism	54	Racial Riot	5
Burglary	16	Rent Riot	3
Enclosure Riot	3	Rescue Of Protestors From Custody	102
Extortion	2	Robbery	252
Food Riot	10	Theft	2
Gleaning Riot	1	Tithe Riot	69
Highway Robbery	3	Verbal Threats (to commit incendiarism)	18
Incendiarism	1,292	Wage Riot	284
Incitement	3	Wilful Damage (fences, crops, tackle etc.)	32

Source: M. Holland (ed), *Swing Unmasked the agricultural riots of 1830 to 1832 and their wider implications* (Milton Keynes, FACHRS Publications), p. 5.

It is difficult to state categorically the exact number of disturbances that occurred because many incidents went unreported. This can be illustrated by the experience of farmer Ford who resided near Oxted. In October 1830 he had all his stock of “hay, potatoes and other articles totally destroyed.”<sup>40</sup> It was reported at the time that “it appeared there had been seven or eight earlier attempts before incendiaries succeeded in their object of burning the outhouses and property they contained.”<sup>41</sup> In addition, vague references were made to disturbances and these incidents are very difficult to identify. A report on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1830 claimed that in the Bagshot area “fires have been seen from hence almost every night during the past week. The whole neighbourhood is in great alarm.”<sup>42</sup> There were only two reported incidents in the vicinity that week. As a result, fear and alarm became endemic throughout the county, although only a small number of landowners or farmers were directly affected (see Table 8.4).

<sup>40</sup> *The Times* 23 October 1830.

<sup>41</sup> *The Times* 23 October 1830.

<sup>42</sup> *The Times* 19 November 1830.

Table 8.4 The Swing Riots in Surrey

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Aug	03/08	Tues	Caterham	A	HO 52/10 letter from Pinder Simpson The Times 18/4/31 10/8/31; QS6/7/40	Portley Farm and farm buildings	Gower assessed rateable value land £117 1831		1830
Oct	22/10	Fri	Oxted	A X 7	23/10/30 The Times; Evans and Ruffy A J 25/10/30; QS6/7/199	Farms, 7 or 8 Attempts before on Ford's farm	Thomas Ford large land owner assessed on rateable value £220	Blakey John	1830
Nov	4/11	Thur	Easterham nr Godstone	A	Rochester Gazette 9/11/30	Stacks of hay and straw	Farmer		1830
Nov	5/11	Fri	Caterham	A	The Times 6/11/30 18/11/30 HO 52/10 letter Pinder Simpson CC 9/11/30 Rochester Gazette 9/11/30; Evans and Ruffy A J 15/11/30 QS/6/7/40	Caterham Lodge 2 stacks of wheat stacks of barley and oats, 3 barns and threshed quantity of wheat 3 stacks of hay(produce 400 acres) sheds and livestock	Simpson Pinder occupier (owned Day Esq) largest landholder in parish rateable value land £387		1830
Nov	11/11	Thur	Byfleet	A	HO 52/10;QS6/7/31;		Mr Dennett assessor rates 1828 –1832 assessed rateable value £9		1830

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Nov	11/11	Thur	Cobham	A	HO 52/10; QS6/7/56	Cobham Court Farm	Thomas Wood one of largest farmers assessed rateable value £429	shots fired not confirmed	1830
Nov	11/11	Thur	Coombe	A	HO 52/10	Coombe Wood Kingston			1830
Nov	11/11	Thur	Ditton	A	HO 52/10	Farm			1830
Nov	11 & 12/11	Thur	Englefield Green	A	15 Nov The Times from The Windsor Express HO 52/10 CC 16/11 Maidstone Journal 16/11/30; QS6/7/76	Barn & rick 50 loads of hay damaged	Rt. Hon Freemantle William large landowner assessed rateable value £500		1830
Nov	11/1/1	Thur	Merton	A	HO 52/10	Farm			1830
Nov	12/11	Thur	Epsom	L	Assi 94/2070 Threatening letter	To burn outhouses and blow-up greenhouses	Charles James and Richard Young nursery men	Sarah Bird	1830
Nov	13/11	Sat	Abinger	A	16/11/30 CC;VCH p.429 Vol 1;HO52/10	Hayrick Fire	Mr Elkins brewer and large property owner Guildford		1830

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Nov	14/11	Sun	Albury	A	16 Nov The Times & CC; 18/11/30 The Times 20/11/30 Political Register; 3/1/31 & 11/1/31 The Times;HO 52/15; QS6/7/56	(Owner John Cooke) 15 quarters of wheat destroyed and wagon tilt cut in pieces	James Franks overseer occupier mill and land from 1827	James Warner	1830
Nov	14/11	Sun	Albury	S	3/1/1831; 11/1/31 The Times; HO 52/15; Political Register 20.11.30; The Times 16.11.30 & 18.11.30	Mill	James Franks overseer 1827–1831 assessor rates value £40 1827	James Warner	1830
Nov	14/11	Sun	Capel	A (could be same attack)	VCH p.429 Vol 1; QS6/7/38	Part of Trouts Farm	Thomas Wenham large landowner assessed rateable value of land £224		1830
Nov	15/11	Mon	Ockley	A	Assi 94/2070; QS6/7/198	Stack of hay burnt on part Trout's farm	Thomas Wenham large landowner assessed rateable value land £416	James Bravery	1830
Nov	15/11	Mon	Egham	L	15/11 The Times reported in Windsor Express	Threatening letters to farms with "machines"			1830
Nov	16/11	Tues	Egham	A	19/11/30 The Times	Egham			1830



Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Nov	16/11	Tues	Ditton /Moseley	A	19/11/30 The Times	Ditton/Moseley			1830
Nov	19/11	Fri	Chidding fold	RF	11/12/30 The Times ; QS6/7/44	80 men assembled demand rise parish wages	William White game keeper and overseer poor assessed rateable value land and house £1 10s	James Gill plus large mob	1830
Nov	19/11	Fri	Wotton	RT	HO 52/10 HO44/22; QS6/7/302	Mr Crawford Magistrate requesting military help	Rev. J.E. Boscowen rated tithes assessed value £113 and Glebe £38		1830
Nov	19/11	Fri	Woking	RT	VCH P. 429 Vol 1	Riot and march to Dorking			1830
Nov	20/11		Norwood	A	24/11 The Times	Fire	Mr Bennett		1830
Nov	20/11		Reigate	A	HO 52/10;QS6/7/212	Barn	Mr Neal rated land assessed value £95		1830
Nov	22/11		Leigh	RF	HO 52/10 ASSI 94/2070 FF39	80 + riot		William Wilkins & William Fisher charged	1830

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Nov	22/11	Mon	Dorking	RF	HO 52/10;VCH p. 429 Vol 1; CC 27/11/30 Brighton Gazette 25/11/30 Assi 94/2070	High Street Dorking Red Lion Inn riot		James Hubbard William Taylor Samuel Croucher James Penfold William Buckland and James Ireland charged	1830
Nov	23/11	Tues	Guildford area	A	HO 52/15	2 farms and 5 fires last 3 weeks	Letter from Lord Arden		1830
Nov	25/11	Thur	Limpsfield	RF	HO 52/10	100 labourers assembled Magistrate dispersed crowd			1830
Nov	25/11	Thur	Egham	A	Hobsbawn and Rudé QS6/7/76	Busby Main	Burton large land owner rated land assessed value of £640 Bakeham House (hose cut)		1830
Nov	28/11	Sun	Banstead	A	1/12/30 CC & BH 4/12/30; HO 52/10; The Times 1/12/30 VCH p. 429	Rickyard two stacks of corn	Turner rated land assessed value £23 10s only 1830 listed		1830
Nov	28/11	Sun	Epsom	A	VCH reports 2 fires P. 429 Vol 1;HO 52/10	Haystack			1830

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Nov	28/11	Sun	Wimbledon	An attempt	29/11/30 The Times		Mr Hampton farmer		1830
Nov			Chessington	L	Filed Nov no date HO 52/10				1830
Dec	6/12	Mon	Oxshott (Stoke d'Abernon)	A	Hobsbawn and Rudé QS6/7/273		Prince Leopold largest landowner Stoke d'Abernon rated land assessed value £414		1830
Dec	12/12	Sun	Cheam	A	Hobsbawn and Rudé Assi 31/26; QS6/7/130		Tauton William Pyle large landowner	Ritchie James	1830
Dec	12/12	Sun	Kingston	L	HO 52/10	Chessington Lodge	Tirry		1830
Dec	18/12		Oxted	A	HO 52/10	Stack of faggots on fire	Mr Palmer Rate collector and one of largest land occupier rates assessed value £396		1830

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Dec	19/12		Wolding ham	A	HO 52/10	Straw stack threshed by machine destroyed	Mr Dartnell assessor and returns made for rates assessed at £84 rateable value and Dartnell one of only 2 landowners in parish		1830
	1830		Kingston	L	SHC Stamp News, HO 52/10; QS6/7/130	Southborough Lodge	Mrs Langley large landowner 1829 husband T Langley dead takes over 1830 rates assessed value £156		1830
	1830		Parish Morden	L	Assi94/2100, QS6/7/175	Letter threatening to destroy barn and stacks;	William Aspin largest land occupier rates assessed value £200	John Longhurst	1830

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Sept	22/9	Thur	Limpsfield	A	CC 27 Sept , QS6/7/163	12 acres peas and beans destroyed and hops destroyed;	Benjamin Steer landowner rates assessed value £40		1831
Oct	1/10	Sat	Virginia Water	A	CC 4 Oct	Clock House	Bowyer		1831
Nov	1/11	Tues	Hook nr Kingston	A	CH & WA 5 Nov, QS6/7/132	4 ricks of corn 2 ricks of hay & a shed containing straw ;	Robert Blair assessor and return rates 1832 –1828 land occupier rates assessed value £51		1831
Nov	14/11	Sat	Guildford	A	CC 15/11/31	Rick of oats produce of 22 acres	Daws		1831
Nov	19/11	Sat	Cheam (Lower)	A	CC 22/11/31	Stack of straw and bean haulm	Willis		1831
Nov	22/11	Tue	Albury	A	CC 29/11/31, QS56/7/2	Rick of oats	Whitbourn large land occupier rates assessed value £134 from 1821–1831		1831

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Nov	22/11	Tue	Shere	A	CC 29/11, QS6/7/231	Barley rick	Baker land occupier from 1830 rates assessed value £25 before Worsfold family from 1807		1831
March	27/3		Farnham	A & L	HO 52/20, QS6/7/88	Arson 2 wks later threatening letter	Furze stack fired belongs to Jack Stevens large landowner rates assessed value £883		1832
Nov	5/11		Pyrford	A	HO 52/20 Lord Arden	2 barns 10 or 11 loads wheat straw and barley			1832
Nov	5/11		Woking	A	HO 52/20 Lord Arden/ Mr Maclean Poor Law Report 1834 Appendix A p.579, QS6/7/299	40 loads of hay 15 loads of wheat and straw	Ryde watermill and house rates assessed value £170 Letter (also reference to fires 2 years previous in same parish		1832
Nov	10/11		Crowhurst nr Godstone	A	HO 52/20	"great fire" barns of hay and corn & outbuildings			1832

Month	Date	Day	Parish	Offence	Comment	Premises	Victim	Protester	Year
Dec	19/12		Reigate	R	Assi 94/2134, QS6/7/212	House break window and demand relief	Assault Thomas Compton guardian poor rates assessed value £45	John and Joseph Laker	1832
Winter	1832		Shere	P	Mr Maclean Poor law Report 1834 Appendix A p.579, QS6/7/231	Poison given to farm stock "fat fat hogs died"	Captain Hay farmer land occupier rates assessed value £166 1830		1832
Winter	1832		Chobham	A	Mr Maclean Poor Law Report 1834 Appendix A p.579	Fire			1832
Winter	1832		Shepperton	A	Mr Maclean Poor Law Report 1834 Appendix A p.579	Fire			1832
Winter	1832		Egham	A	Mr Maclean Poor Law Report 1834 Appendix A p.579				1832

Key: A= Incendiarism; B= machine breaking ; L= anonymous threatening letters; RF = food riots; RT= tithe meeting riot ; s=shooting m=march p=poison

HO Home Office National Archive

CC- County Chronicle, CH & WA- County Herald and Weekly Advertiser, SHC- Surrey History Centre

H.E. Malden, *Victoria County History Vol. 1* (London, Dawson, 1967)

E. Hobsbawn and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1969)

*Who was attacked*

Some contemporary observers believed the attacks were indiscriminate assaults against property and “without respect of persons.”<sup>43</sup> Writing to William Bray of Shere, Henry Drummond observed “The rising of the labourers that is taking place throughout the southern counties of England threatens the destruction of all property. They are maddened by oppression .....they are determined to take the law into their own hands and say they prefer being hanged or shot to continuing as they are.”<sup>44</sup> Others, as, for example Wakefield, believed the attacks were directed towards the squire and the parson.<sup>45</sup> Hobsbawm and Rudé did not support this view but saw farmers, particular large farmers, suffering the most. The FACHRS research team also identified farmers as the major victim.<sup>46</sup> In 1830 a major source of disturbance in Surrey, reportedly, was the action of “the small farmers who are disposed to urge their poorer neighbours to the commission of excesses in the hope that by such means they may succeed in getting rid of tithes and diminishing the amount of rent.”<sup>47</sup> Recent research does not fully support this conclusion, as rioters attacked a number of large farmers, including the farms of Gower in Caterham and Freemantle in Egham.<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that five of the incendiary fires were directed towards rates assessors or collectors and, in common with other counties, towards the Anglican clergy, overseers, threshing-machine owners and millers (see Table 8. 4).

*Where the disturbances occurred*

It is important to plot the incidents of unrest in Surrey (see Map 8.5).

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<sup>43</sup> *The Times* 7 January 1831.

<sup>44</sup> SHC H. Drummond, ‘letter to William Bray of Shere 1830, private papers of Sir Jocelyn Bray’.

<sup>45</sup> E.G. Wakefield, *Swing unmasked or the cause of rural incendiarism* (London, E. Wilson, 1831), pp.28–31.

<sup>46</sup> Holland, *Swing unmasked*, p. 17.

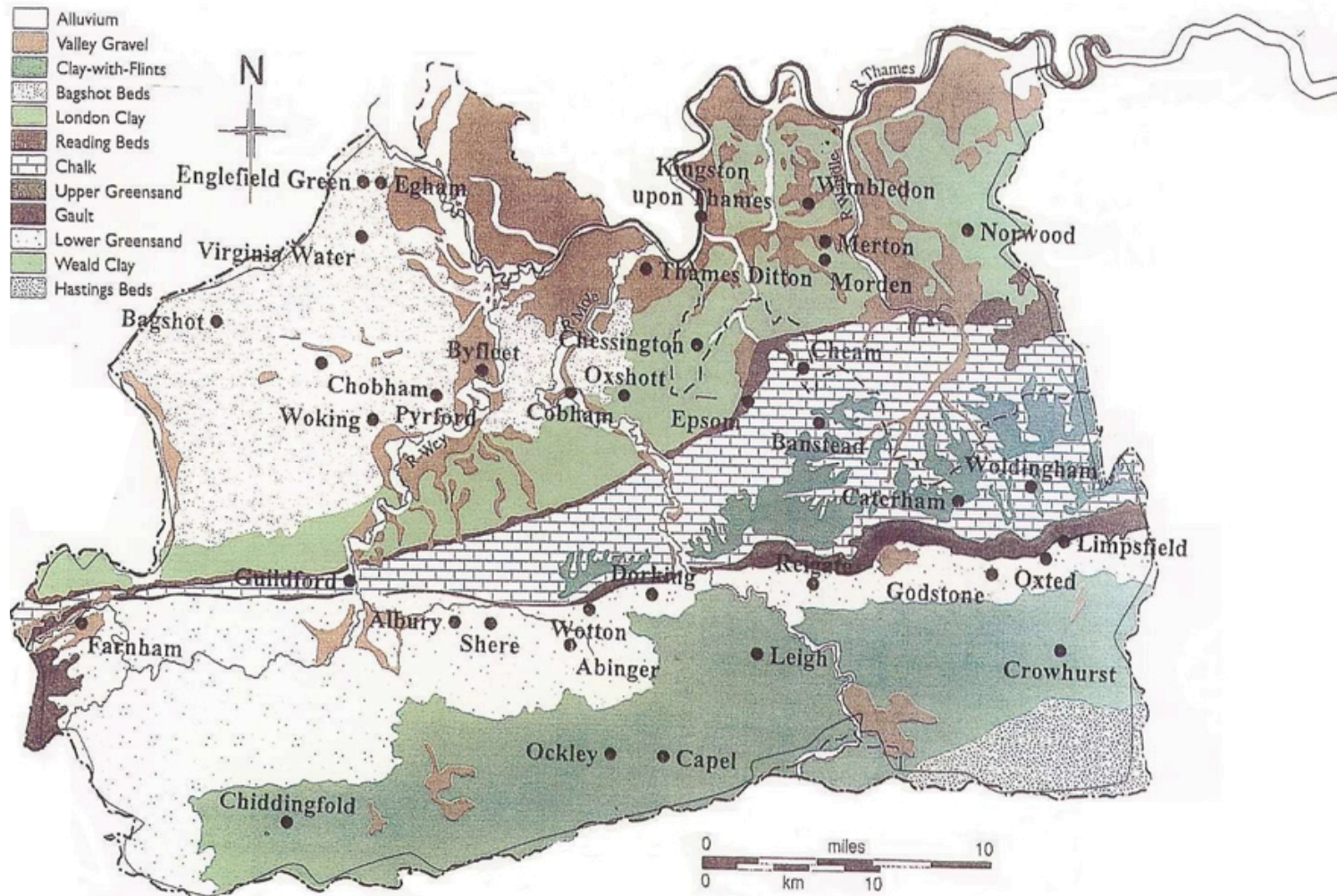
<sup>47</sup> *The Times* 3 December 1830.

<sup>48</sup> See Table 8.4, it is not possible to complete a full listing of landholders for Surrey because not all the farms attacked can be identified.



**Map 8.5 - The Disturbances in Surrey**

● Place of disturbance



The sparsely populated heath lands in the south west of the county saw little disturbance, whereas the wealden clay districts, stretching in a thick belt from Albury eastward towards Limpsfield, witnessed much unrest.<sup>49</sup> The soil in this area required drainage and thorough liming, which was expensive and beyond the reach of many farmers. The three very wet years 1829, 1830 and 1831(as discussed in Chapter Two) made the situation worse. The other part of the county badly affected by unrest, comprised that part of the clay lands that included the area from Woking to Wallington, where mixed farming was most common. Here, there had been a decrease in sheep farming as a result of sheep rot. Fewer signs of unrest were apparent in the north of the county where agricultural land was increasingly given over to dairy farming and market gardening, and where wages were traditionally higher and employment opportunities greater “by the pull of the London market.”<sup>50</sup> This tends to suggest that local agricultural conditions did affect the incidence of unrest. Most of the disturbances occurred in areas of poor farming, badly affected by the 1820s agricultural depression.

#### *Rick burning and incendiarism*

According to Thompson, rick burning and incendiarism, as instruments of vengeance and intimidation, were customary ways of protesting or settling grievances in rural England.<sup>51</sup> Cobbett thought that labourers principally resorted to arson where they were too weak to force redress through overt means.<sup>52</sup> Even so, they were usually isolated incidents. The sheer scale of the incendiary fires in the years 1830–32 shows these were very troubled times.

<sup>49</sup> Around Blackheath 1,000 acres, Peasmarsh, Windlesham and Frimley.

<sup>50</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 174.

<sup>51</sup> E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, Penguin, reprint 1993), pp. 185–258.

<sup>52</sup> R. Wells, ‘Mr William Cobbett, Captain Swing and King William IV,’ *Agricultural History Review*, 45 (1997) 48.

When a stack was set alight, it invariably burnt laterally towards the centre, before erupting into a mighty conflagration. Depending on the size of the stack, it could take considerable time (on average one hour or more) for the flames to burst through. It was possible to ignite a number of stacks simultaneously by running fuses made of straw from the central point to each stack. Once alight and the fire had taken hold, it was extremely difficult to extinguish the flames. The fire fighting equipment was so rudimentary it would take approximately 30–40 minutes to set up the bucket chain and to get the fire engine working. Even when more than one pump was deployed, the chances of extinguishing the flames were slight. This helps to explain why rick burning was one of the most feared of rural crimes. The gap between the time when the stack was lit to the detection of the fire also helps to explain why it was so difficult to apprehend the culprits. In fact, the perpetrators could be miles away or back home when the fire finally burnt through the stack.<sup>53</sup> These incidents may have been the work of individual labourers with a personal grievance but, as John Archer has pointed out, private motive sometimes coincided with the shared grievances of a wider community which protected the culprit from detection.<sup>54</sup> Landowners were also reluctant to come forward with information. Insurance officers noted that “most individuals in country parts shrink from the duty of seeking to discover the incendiaries with the necessary determination and perseverance, lest by rendering themselves conspicuous they draw their vengeance upon themselves.”<sup>55</sup> This helps to explain why, of the 258 prisoners tried at the 1830 Winchester Special Assizes, none were accused of arson.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> M. Holland, FACHRS conference paper presented on *Swing riots* May 2003.

<sup>54</sup> J. Archer, *By a flash and a scare, arson animal maiming and poaching in East Anglia 1815–1870* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 96.

<sup>55</sup> NA HO 44/23, ‘21 December 1830 letter from B. Beaumont to Viscount Melbourne’.

<sup>56</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.258.

*Fires across Surrey*

The first Surrey fire broke out in Caterham on the night of 2–3 August 1830 at Portley farm and began with the setting alight of the thatch of the barn, housing the threshing machine. The conflagration also destroyed farm buildings containing corn. There were conflicting rumours that the fire was a reprisal for the employment of Irish labourers, or alternatively that the Irish labourers themselves had fired the barn. To add to the mystery, the previous occupant of the farm, a former businessman who was said to be highly respected in the neighbourhood, was the only suspect actually brought to trial eight months later at the Surrey summer assizes of 1831, but was discharged due to lack of evidence.<sup>57</sup> At the time of the fire the ex-farmer at Portley Farm had been insolvent and was about to have his goods seized to pay his debts. This is an interesting case, as it is probable that, as in other southern counties, not all firings were committed by disgruntled or unemployed labourers, because the climate of protest gave cover for those who had personal motives or grudges.<sup>58</sup> Reverend Onslow believed that the fires that had occurred in the Send and Ripley neighbourhood “originated in private pique.” Reverend Heberden of Great Bookham also believed that the burnings were “to gratify the malice of some one individual.” George Holme Sumner identified three fires, at Albury, Woking and Byfleet, as caused by personal revenge.<sup>59</sup>

During September and October other fires broke out in and around Godstone and Oxted. In November 1830 there were further fires across Surrey. On 5 November fires at the farm of Pinder Simpson in the parish of Caterham “consumed two stacks of wheat, three barns, a large building, two or three stacks of barley and oats and a quantity of threshed

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<sup>57</sup> *The Times* 18 April and 10 August 1831.

<sup>58</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp. 223 and 225–6.

<sup>59</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 53, Send and Ripley, Great Bookham and East Clandon, Woking fire Mr Ryde’s farm; Byfleet fire Mr Dravett’s farm; Albury fire Mr Franks mill pp. 474e–489e.

wheat in the barns, making the farmyard a scene of ruin.”<sup>60</sup> Reportedly, the fire completely destroyed nearly 400 acres of land. Fortunately, the livestock was saved “with the exception of a cow which was so scorched” that it had to be slaughtered.<sup>61</sup> The second week of November saw fires near Kingston, Byfleet, Cobham, Englefield Green, Albury, Capel, Abinger, Epsom and Merton.

A case of arson that gained particular notoriety took place on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1830 at a flourmill in Albury, and where shots were fired at one of the windows. The fire destroyed a large stock of flour and corn stored in the mill, while, reportedly, a mob stood around and made no effort to save it. When asked to help, some replied, “Why should we, we cannot be worse off than we are.”<sup>62</sup> At the time, £300 was raised by subscription and a reward offered for the discovery of the offenders, but no-one came forward. Suspicion fell on the Oak gang, which appeared to be still operating in 1832. C. H. Maclean reported that “there is an organized body of men in this parish ...who are the terror of the whole neighbourhood.... Those belonging to the gang are known and are objects of universal terror.”<sup>63</sup> On 8<sup>th</sup> January 1831 the magistrates at Guildford and Clandon sent letters to the Prime Minister stating that there was evidence to implicate other local people in the crime. The authorities were anxious to set an example of speedy conviction. James Warner, a local labourer aged thirty, was tried for “wilfully and maliciously setting fire to a flour mill at Albury in the occupation of James Franks.”<sup>64</sup> He was convicted and then executed on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1831, ten days after the trial. At the time, suggestions were made that Warner should be hanged on Albury Heath or Newlands Corner in order to “introduce a salutary effect on the minds of the population.” This did not happen, as Lord Melbourne

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<sup>60</sup> NA HO 52/10, 5 November 1830.

<sup>61</sup> *The County Chronicle* 26 October 1830.

<sup>62</sup> H. E. Malden (ed), *The history of the county of Surrey* (London, Dawson, reprint 1967), p.429. It is not possible to verify this account although in *The Herald* 18 March 1820 reported the oak gang had been involved in sheep stealing and burglaries in the Albury and Shere neighbourhood.

<sup>63</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant commissioners Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p.579A .

<sup>64</sup> *The Times* 3 January 1831, Report of winter assizes Kingston 1 January 1831.

was of the opinion it would not be advisable to make any change in the place of execution.<sup>65</sup>

The facts of the case are not totally clear, but what is known is that on 14<sup>th</sup> November the Home Secretary received a letter, stating that James Franks had become “odious to the people when he was lately the overseer of the poor.”<sup>66</sup> Mr Franks had employed Warner but had sacked him. Richard Tidy, another employee, reported at the trial that Mr Franks had accused James Warner of beating his horse and James Warner had told him “he’ll get no good by it; he will get served out for.”<sup>67</sup> William Cobbett reported the event in his *Political Register* and it is interesting to note that although he supported the cause of the agricultural labourer, he had no time for James Warner. He judged him “a fellow of the most determined atrocity of character.”<sup>68</sup> In addition, there seems to have been a great deal of bitterness towards this execution, as indicated in the contents of a note later found near the workhouse in Guildford “Warner is murdered Franks, Drummond and Smallpiece shall die..... I could clear him at the place, you false-swearing villain. We fired the mill. Starving and firing go together.”<sup>69</sup> The same night on which the note was found, a gun loaded with bullets was fired into the bedroom of the master of the workhouse at Albury. It passed through the bedstead and partition and lodged in the wall of the passage.<sup>70</sup>

Henry Drummond wrote to Lord Melbourne after James Warner’s execution, enclosing a statement from Comber, a fellow prisoner, which claimed that Warner was “instigated to this deed by a stranger who paid him money.”<sup>71</sup> The stranger had also paid for several other fires at Tonbridge, Horsham and Stanmore. However, these allegations remained unproved. Nonetheless, Drummond suggested a plan whereby Comber would try and infiltrate the gang thought responsible, by setting fire to one of Drummond’s own

<sup>65</sup> NA HO 41/9, ‘letter to G.H. Sumner 8 January 1831.

<sup>66</sup> NA HO 52/10, letter 14 November 1830.

<sup>67</sup> *The Times* 3 January 1831.

<sup>68</sup> W. Cobbett, *Political Register* 20 November 1830.

<sup>69</sup> *The Times* 10 January 1831.

<sup>70</sup> M. James, research paper FACHRS conference on *James Warner* May 2003, and *The Times* 11 January 1831

<sup>71</sup> Royal Archives Windsor MP/86/75, ‘H. Drummond 16 January 1831 letter to Lord Melbourne’.

haystacks.<sup>72</sup> This plan was not supported by Melbourne who believed it would only encourage false accusations.<sup>73</sup>

### *Fires 1830–1832*

Surrey had not seen the end of the unrest. Throughout the month of December, fires continued in some parishes including Guildford, Oxted, Godstone and at Woldingham, where a stack of straw, that reportedly may have been threshed by machine, was burned on 19 December.<sup>74</sup> Further fires broke out at Ockley, Woking, Cobham, Reigate, Epsom, Banstead and Bagshot. The unrest in Surrey continued, and there were sporadic outbreaks of arson for the next two years. The *County Chronicle* reported fires throughout the county in 1831. At Limpsfield in September 1831 twelve acres of peas, beans and hops were destroyed, and in November there were fires in Guildford, Cheam, Albury and Shere. After an oat rick was burned at a farm in Bagshot in November 1831, a subscription was raised for a reward of £150. Nonetheless, two months later and with no arrests, a request was made to grant a pardon for anyone who would give evidence.<sup>75</sup> Nobody came forward, and, as Cobbett noted, incendiarism was “the most easy mode of protest to perpetrate, the least liable to detection.”<sup>76</sup> In 1832 there were fewer recorded cases of arson. In March a stack was fired in Farnham, and in November in Pyrford two barns and a large quantity of wheat and barley were destroyed, and the same month a “great fire” broke out in Crowhurst.<sup>77</sup> There were other fires in Woking, Egham, Chobham and Shepperton.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Royal Archives Windsor MP/86/76, ‘H. Drummond 21 January 1831 letter to Lord Melbourne’.

<sup>73</sup> Royal Archives Windsor MP/86/78, ‘Lord Melbourne 23 January 1831 Letter to Henry Drummond’.

<sup>74</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘Guildford and Oxted stacks of faggots were set alight: Godstone and Woldingham stacks of straw burned 19 December 1830’.

<sup>75</sup> NA HO 52/20, 23 November 1831.

<sup>76</sup> W. Cobbett, *Political Register*, 22 January 1831.

<sup>77</sup> NA HO 52/20, November 1832.

<sup>78</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX, Evidence C.H. Maclean p.579A.

*Revolutionary agents at work in the county*

At the time of the unrest, there was a growing suspicion that revolutionary agents were at work in the country. The inference was that outsiders, foreigners, instigated the attacks, a view that contemporaries found more acceptable than the notion that locals had caused them. George Holme Sumner of East Clandon, for instance, believed that the riots were not started by the labourers of Kent but by foreign emissaries.<sup>79</sup> It was also a commonly held view among members of the establishment, both Whig and Tory, that the fires did not originate with the distress of the farm labourers but were the work of foreigners or a person recognised by some contemporaries as “Swing, the rick burner.”<sup>80</sup> Peel and Lord Grey claimed that foreigners were the cause of the problem, and the Duke of Wellington stated, “the operations of the conspirators in this country are conducted by Englishmen but that the original focus is in Paris.”<sup>81</sup> He traced the financial backing of the Swing rioters to the money of the Paris based *Société Propaganda*. Maurice Bernays, an English tutor living in France at the time of the riots, wrote to Lord Melbourne, confirming his belief that there was a connection between the revolution of 1830 in France and the riots in England, as the means of destruction was identical. He had also heard that a band of incendiaries now under protection in France have declared that they were to be sent “au pays du anglais” although this was never confirmed.<sup>82</sup>

Rumours circulated during the Swing riots that the incendiaries had been professionally trained and this is why the authorities were so unsuccessful in apprehending them. Colonel Murray suggested they were not local labourers, but men well trained in chemical ignition in France.<sup>83</sup> It was also reported “that people go about the county on horseback with the appearance of gentry, making inquiries of the country people about the character

<sup>79</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 53 Reply East Clandon p.478e.

<sup>80</sup> P. J. Jones, ‘Captain Swing and rural popular consciousness: nineteenth-century southern English social history in context’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis University of Southampton, 2002), p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> NA HO 52/6, ‘Duke of Wellington letter to Lord Malmesbury 6 December 1830’.

<sup>82</sup> Royal Archives Windsor MP/86/12, ‘M. Bernays letter to Lord Melbourne 10 January 1831’.

<sup>83</sup> NA HO 44/22, ‘Letter Colonel Murray 20 November 1830’.



of their neighbours and informing them that a revolution and war is going to break out.”<sup>84</sup> The association of the riots with strangers and foreigners is evident in much of the literature produced at the time. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1830 a meeting was called in the parish of Egham to consider the best means for the preservation of property. In Egham, a householders’ meeting declared that the fires in Surrey “did not originate in any ill spirit among the inhabitants but had been the work of distant and foreign incendiaries.”<sup>85</sup> The meeting set down six resolutions, the first one blaming “malicious and evil disposed persons excited and aided by foreign emissaries” for the fires.<sup>86</sup> From Egham there were also numerous addresses, warning against “the artful and wicked designs of foreigners and strangers.”<sup>87</sup> One read:

“Awake from your trance! The enemies of England are at work actively to ruin us. Hordes of Frenchmen are employed doing the deed of incendiaries and inciting to acts of tumult...The fires of Normandy are revived in Kent, are spreading to Sussex and Surrey...shall the conqueror of the Nile, of Trafalgar and Waterloo be tricked by the arts and deceits of Frenchmen”<sup>88</sup>

In 1834 in reply to the “*Rural Queries*”, Poor Law Commissioners commented that the main cause of the riots of 1830 was “the example of successful insurrection in France and Belgium.”<sup>89</sup>

### *Strangers in the neighbourhood*

Fears were always heightened when strangers appeared in a neighbourhood. As Jones has noted, one face of Captain Swing “was the Swing rioter who patrolled the country lanes with his band of labourers’ pikes and pitchforks in hand.”<sup>90</sup> An apparent

<sup>84</sup> NA HO 52/10, 11 November 1830.

<sup>85</sup> *The Times* 22 November 1830.

<sup>86</sup> SHC Acc 1493/2, ‘Egham Vestry Minute Book 16 November 1830’.

<sup>87</sup> NA HO 52/6, ‘Egham addresses 1830’.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX p. 23.

<sup>90</sup> Jones, Captain Swing, p. 14.

characteristic of the reports written at the time was the stress placed on the innocence of the local population. *The Times* reported on the prevailing opinion that an “organised gang of fellows” were responsible. The newspaper reported on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1830 that “the employment of threshing machines and also of strangers in that part of Surrey (i.e. Oxted) as well as Kent has given rise to much discontent among the labourers in these places.”<sup>91</sup> When a labourer named Gasson was robbed in Reigate on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1830, he reported that the robber told him “you have been very quiet in these parts but we shall give you a burn before the winter is out, and they mentioned the names of several of the principal landowners and farmers in the neighbourhood.”<sup>92</sup> After two cases of arson in Oxted in October 1830, corn, hay and potatoes were destroyed at two farms. A man described as a “wanderer” was taken into custody following the fires. He denied starting the fires, but reportedly had in his possession ammunition, fire-making equipment, a book of instructions on explosives and papers foreseeing revolution.<sup>93</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1830 the inhabitants of Staines were in a great state of anxiety and alarm when it was reported that three men had stopped a person in the street to enquire after Mr South, a farmer. They informed the man, “Tell Mr South his premises will be on fire in half an hour.”<sup>94</sup> There was a heightened sense of fear across the county at the end of November 1830, as reports circulated that two or three strangers on horseback “gentlemen, well dressed”, were travelling through the county making inquiries as to the names of farmers, whether they used threshing machines, their attitude to the labourers and the wages they paid.<sup>95</sup> No such figures were ever apprehended but witnesses from the counties of Cambridgeshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire and Essex all described mysterious and sinister men in their vicinity during the riots.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *The Times* 23 October 1830.

<sup>92</sup> *The Times* 19 October 1830.

<sup>93</sup> *The Times* 23 October 1830.

<sup>94</sup> *The Times* 23 November 1830.

<sup>95</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘5, 14, 19 and 20 November 1830’.

<sup>96</sup> Jones, *Captain Swing*, p. 7

Drummond, in his reply to the Rural Queries, stated he believed the unrest in Surrey was caused by men “going about the country....urging the discontented to take the law into their own hands.”<sup>97</sup> The *County Chronicle*, reported that “the village of Chobham was thrown into considerable consternation by seven sturdy beggars making their appearance.”<sup>98</sup> They were locked in the workhouse overnight but after being questioned were released. This incident clearly illustrates the unease felt by many “it is evident that beggars assume greater boldness than usual, knowing that a dread or fear pervades the minds of people.... at this present alarming time it would be well for parishes to know that all their labourers are at home and not leave them unemployed to perambulate the country.”<sup>99</sup>

Some of the visitors to parishes appeared to be very threatening. At Teddington on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1830 a gentleman on horseback reportedly said “he knew that there was somebody of the name of Camphill who had machinery on his farm and he would advise him to take care.”<sup>100</sup> Some descriptions of the “strangers” were very detailed. Reports from the Kingston fair of November 1830 described a gentleman with a “cockade in his hat .. rides a black horse” and another man appeared as his servant riding a black mare “appears to be about the same age of thirty dressed in dark clothes.”<sup>101</sup> Now all rural communities were on a state of constant alert, and various sightings of strangers were reported. The son of the owner of Abinger Hall wrote to his father at his London residence, “people go about the county on horseback with the appearance of gentry making enquiries of the country people about the character of their neighbours and informing them that a revolution and a war is going to break out.”<sup>102</sup> Many thought it the

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<sup>97</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 53, Reply Albury p. 474e.

<sup>98</sup> *County Chronicle* 23 November 1830.

<sup>99</sup> *County Chronicle* 23 November 1830.

<sup>100</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘10 November 1830’.

<sup>101</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘14 November 1830’.

<sup>102</sup> Malden, *A History*, p. 429.

“work of strangers smugglers or foreigners or mysterious gentlemen in gigs driving furiously about the country led by Captain Swing scattering fireballs and devastation.”<sup>103</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé commented that all these wild rumours of Captain Swing as a Jacobin agent, a papist or a Methodist, and rumours of mysterious men travelling through the countryside in gigs stirring up the labourers were derived only from imagination.<sup>104</sup>

The poet, John Clare, published a poem in 1830 *The Hue and Cry: A Tale of the Times*, which, perhaps because of its political content, was published without Clare’s name.<sup>105</sup> It satirised the wild rumours of mysterious men riding through the countryside and stirring up discontent.

“Some said it was Cobbett, some said it was Paine,  
Some went into France to Voltaire  
And when they got there, why they got back again  
To discover that nothing was there.  
Some rummaged old sermons, some printed new tracts  
And handbills like messengers ran.  
Conjectures were many, but few were the facts  
As to who was the crooked old man.”<sup>106</sup>

At the same time there were those who were prepared to admit openly:

“A mysterious kind of veil has been thrown over the guilty transactions.  
They are Frenchmen or fiends that have set fire to English barns and hay  
ricks in a blaze! What trash! The barns and the agricultural objects are set

<sup>103</sup> J. L. Hammond and B. Hammond, *The village labourer 1760–1832* (London, Longmans Green, 1920), p. 285.

<sup>104</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 200.

<sup>105</sup> J. Bate, *John Clare* (London, Picador, 2003), p. 357.

<sup>106</sup> Bate, *John Clare*, p. 357.

fire by clownish men who are in a state of starvation who know of no other means of avenging themselves.”<sup>107</sup>

*No local involvement?*

Many parishes were anxious to distant themselves from the unrest. Charles Jerram, vicar and magistrate in Chobham, stated “no riots or burnings having occurred here.” Moses Duck, the overseer in Egham, did admit there was “considerable dissatisfaction ... among the lower orders” but added the proviso that Egham had “suffered little owing to the laudable exertions of the respectable inhabitants.”<sup>108</sup> Some blamed the beer houses for inciting unrest. Thomas Page, JP, of Cobham saw them as “the most fatal consequence to the peace of the neighbourhood ..the greatest curse ever inflicted upon a community” and Henry Parr Beloe, a Rector in Guildford, attributed the unrest to the “inflammatory articles in the public papers taken in and read at the low public houses and beer shops.”<sup>109</sup>

Reverend Jones of Surrey wrote to the Home Office in November 1830, pointing out “the incendiary and machine breakers were different people, that the one was a foreigner and the other the cottager.”<sup>110</sup> He justified this by explaining that only local people would know the whereabouts of hidden threshing machines that were being destroyed, and these people took no part in starting incendiary fires. The magistrates of Reigate were not so convinced that the local people were completely innocent of involvement in the arson attacks, but at the same time they believed (or wished to believe) outsiders must have instigated them. They wrote to the Home Secretary on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1830, confirming that

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<sup>107</sup> *Windsor and Eton Express* 13 November 1830.

<sup>108</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 53, Reply Chobham p. 477e and Reply Egham p. 479e.

<sup>109</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part 1 XXX Replies to Question 53, Reply Cobham p.477e and Reply Guildford United parishes of St Mary and Holy Trinity Reply p.481e.

<sup>110</sup> NA HO52/10, ‘letter Rev. Jones to Home Office 13 November 1830’.

an organised group must have come from London “stirring up the labouring classes throughout the county to acts of insubordination and the destruction of farming stock by fire which is now becoming so prevalent.”<sup>111</sup> Many observers were convinced, or tried to convince themselves, that the incendiaries had no connection with the local population. In private some officials did acknowledge that the fires were not the work of outsiders or radicals. The police officer for the London County Fire Office stated that “in almost every instance wherein conviction has taken place the culprit has been a servant of the sufferer or person living near him, acting under some motive of revenge.”<sup>112</sup>

It was difficult for farmers and landowners to accept that their own labourers could have been involved in burning their crops, for it broke the bond between the labourer and his master. It could be argued that the labourers were driven to protest because they felt landowners and farmers were not doing enough to relieve their hardship, and that they had already broken the bond. William Cobbett, who was aware of the scale of the rural distress, acknowledged that landowners were loathe to accept the fires were started by local labourers. Cobbett believed that the labourers “must have had some deep irresistible provocation or that Englishmen are become a totally altered people.” He saw the labourers “desperate by hunger” and he pointed out farmers should pay them higher wages.<sup>113</sup> At his trial in 1831, he insisted that incendiaries were not strangers but locals.<sup>114</sup>

### *Who were targeted*

Why some villages and farms were affected and others not, is impossible to answer categorically “a village is a subtle complex of past and present, of the permanent and

<sup>111</sup> NA HO52/10, ‘letter from clerks to the Justice for Reigate to Secretary State 19 Oct 1830’.

<sup>112</sup> NA HO22/44/270, ‘letter from James Davis to Sir Robert Peel 22 November 1830’.

<sup>113</sup> W.Cobbett, *Two Penny Trash* 1 February 1831.

<sup>114</sup> W. Cobbett, *Political Register* 22 January 1831.

changing” where economic and social factors come into play.<sup>115</sup> Certain landlords and farmers were targeted. Fire raising was usually the work of individuals, and as the evidence of the subsequent trials shows, some people like James Warner were motivated by private vengeance.<sup>116</sup> This helps explain why landowners were also anxious to free themselves from any possible cause for attack. Pinder Simpson, whose farm, Caterham Lodge, was attacked, wrote to the Home Secretary confirming that he paid his labourers good wages and that he neither employed strangers in preference to Caterham men nor had he ever had a threshing machine. He stressed in the letter, “I have for many years back, constantly employed more of our men than my farm required, for the sake of avoiding pauperism and have always given full wages, varying from 12s to 15s per week according to their abilities.”<sup>117</sup> *The Times* reported after the fire at Caterham Lodge farm in November 1830 that “it is satisfactory to know that labouring people evinced every disposition to arrest the progress of the flames.”<sup>118</sup> Pinder Simpson also wrote an open letter to “his brother farmer, workmen and neighbours” thanking them for their exertions.<sup>119</sup> G. Ruthorn, a Bow Street officer, went to Caterham but was unable to identify the offenders.

There were also many reports of labourers refusing to assist in the extinguishing of fires. At a fire in Banstead Lord Arden reported that a carpenter in the village “exhibited himself as enjoying the scene and wished the farmer is in the midst of the flames.”<sup>120</sup> The Home Office was informed and the man detained, though he was later released. At Englefield Green, the Right Hon. Freemantle’s barn and hayrick were set alight. The fire engines attended and the barn was saved but it was reported that the hose of the fire engine had been cut through.<sup>121</sup> Again in November 1832, Lord Melbourne learned that there had

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<sup>115</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 176.

<sup>116</sup> *The Times* 11 January 1831.

<sup>117</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘Letter 5 November 1830’.

<sup>118</sup> *The Times* 6 November 1830.

<sup>119</sup> *The Times* 18 November 1830.

<sup>120</sup> NA HO52/20, ‘Letter 29 November 1830’.

<sup>121</sup> *The Times* 15 November 1830.

been fires on two farms in Woking and Pyrford, and unfortunately “the behaviour of the greater part of the populace at both fires was reprehensible.”<sup>122</sup>

At the same time, landowners were not totally confident of their labourers’ loyalty, fearing that they might seize weapons and threaten the local population. A letter written in December 1830 to the Home Secretary concerned the “150–200 pikes lying in a room at Walton Lodge”<sup>123</sup> and warned “there are many discontented evil-minded persons amongst the lower orders.”<sup>124</sup> This clearly shows that the authorities were not totally convinced of the innocence of the local inhabitants. Nonetheless, the Surrey munitions stores were never attacked, and as a letter from Winchester to the Home Office reported, in Hampshire “the mob have in no case been armed except with bludgeons, iron bars and scythes.”<sup>125</sup> This also applied to Surrey, but it did not allay the fear.

### *Riots in Surrey*

In Surrey, as in the rest of the country, there is little evidence of a plan for organised rebellion. There is the intractable problem of the uneven local distribution of the unrest. Rioting seems to have been essentially a local phenomenon and the organisation was very much on a local scale, the village being the “starting point” of all the Swing activities. As J.P.D. Dunbabin has explained, “riot spread partly by rumour and partly by contagion from individual villages which operated over a radius of, at most, half a day’s journey in each direction. And riots of this kind were all ephemeral, to be measured in days rather than weeks.”<sup>126</sup> Surrey followed this pattern, except for the riots in Woking and Dorking in November 1830, which were deliberate attempts by a radical group from Horsham to stir up trouble.

<sup>122</sup> NA HO 52/20, ‘Letter 10 November 1832’.

<sup>123</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘Letter 3 December 1830’.

<sup>124</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘Letter 3 December 1830’.

<sup>125</sup> NA HO 57 (7), ‘Letter 26 November 1830’.

<sup>126</sup> J.P.D. Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain* (New York, Holmes and Meir Publishers, 1974), p. 20.



The protest by the arsonist or the author of a threatening letter remains hidden, whereas the voice and face of the rioter was more easily identified and apprehended. Moreover, such acts of defiance required great courage, because those arrested for felony could face a capital sentence. Not surprisingly, it was common for labourers involved in rioting to claim they had been forced into action.<sup>127</sup> After Mr Drummond, as a magistrate, dispersed a large meeting in Woking on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1830, part of the crowd moved off towards Dorking “following a leader dressed in a smock frock.”<sup>128</sup> *The Times* reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1830 that the Woking labourers had insisted that they had been forced to meet people from Horsham and they had been afraid to disobey. It does appear that a radical group based in the town made some attempts to agitate both labourers and small farmers in the nearby parishes. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1830 a mob of forty persons paraded through the town of Dorking, shouting “Down with the tithes! bread or blood!”<sup>129</sup> They were mainly agricultural labourers from surrounding parishes for, as the deposition of G. Adams states, “on their way to Dorking they compelled all whom they met to accompany them and threatened those who refused.”<sup>130</sup> “Pressing” labourers to join the protest was a typical method used by itinerant bands.<sup>131</sup> On the way to Dorking the ringleaders of the rioters at Leigh and Horley were William Fisher and William Wilkins, both from Charlwood. William Fisher informed the magistrates at Reigate on 24<sup>th</sup> November that on the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> November a man professing to have come from Newdigate brought them a letter in which they were asked by the “parish men” of Newdigate to meet them at Dorking. It seems they were threatened and coerced that they must go or else they “must abide by the consequences.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> P.J. Jones, *Captain Swing*, p.24.

<sup>128</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 113.

<sup>129</sup> *The Times* 3 January 1831.

<sup>130</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘deposition of G. Adams enclosed in letter from clerk to the Justices of the Hundred of Reigate 26 November 1830’.

<sup>131</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 209.

<sup>132</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘deposition of W. Fisher 26 November 1830’.

On arrival in Dorking the local magistrates on this occasion agreed to hear the labourers' complaints at a meeting at the Red Lion public house. A number of local tradesmen were present at the meeting, including James Penfold, Samuel Croucher and William Buckland, all carpenters.<sup>133</sup> After some time the meeting adjourned for the day. William Crawford, a Dorking magistrate, informed the waiting crowd outside of the adjournment, and then the atmosphere became truculent and threatening. *The Times* reported that "respectable inhabitants were sworn in as special constables while a large mob of labourers assembled in front of the building (the Red Lion) and demanded relief."<sup>134</sup> It was also noted that "great numbers of the agricultural labourers kept arriving from the surrounding country ...many of them were armed with sticks and bludgeons."<sup>135</sup> The mob of eighty or more then retaliated by attacking the Red Lion Inn by throwing stones at the windows so that "scarcely a single pane of glass being left in the windows where the magistrates were sitting."<sup>136</sup> Finally, some rioters forced their way into the room where the meeting had taken place and refused to leave until their grievances were redressed. The magistrates were determined "to enforce the law against all persons guilty of riotous behaviour" and to preserve the peace.<sup>137</sup>

During a riot it was common practice for a magistrate to attend, supported by the military or special constables, to read the Riot Act and order the rioters to disperse. If the rioters then refused, they faced the prospect of arrest. This was the practice followed in Dorking. A magistrate read the Riot Act but the mob drowned him out. It was reported that four special constables, namely Samuel Bothwell, William Combes, W. Barlett and George Dewdney, were assaulted by the mob.<sup>138</sup> The magistrates called in the troops to restore order and five of the ringleaders were arrested. The mob at once tried to rescue them but without success, for a party of Life Guards escorted the men out of town. The mob then

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<sup>133</sup> NA ASSI 94/2070 F36, 'Lent Assizes 1831: Penfold, Croucher and Buckland later tried for their involvement in the subsequent protest found guilty and imprisoned at the 1831 Assizes'.

<sup>134</sup> *The Times* 3 January 1831.

<sup>135</sup> *The Times* 27 November 1830.

<sup>136</sup> *The Times* 27 November 1830.

<sup>137</sup> *The Times* 22 November 1830.

gradually dispersed. The five men were later examined by the magistrates and declared that they had taken part in the riot because low wages made it impossible to maintain their families. When William Wilkins was arrested he spoke about the hardship of trying to maintain a family, “We have such large families and such little pay that we can’t get along. I worked six weeks for 10s and never had a morsel of meat but once. I have a large family of five children.”<sup>139</sup> Later, six other rioters were arrested and sent to the county gaol.<sup>140</sup> After the riot James Shudi Broadwood Esq., who owned the nearby Broadwood estate, wrote to Lord Melbourne and complained that “the ringleaders of the riots at Horsham had not been laid hold of.”<sup>141</sup> He also noted, “that some of the mob moved onto Sussex and joined another assemblage there.”<sup>142</sup>

### *Tithe and wage riots*

As part of the Swing disturbances, the most common riots in the country at large<sup>143</sup> and in Surrey were tithe and wage riots (see Table 8.4). On the 19<sup>th</sup> November labourers in the parishes of Wotton and Ockley assembled in order to prevent the payment of tithes (the 19<sup>th</sup> being the tithe audit day) to Reverend J E Boscawen, Rector of Wotton.<sup>144</sup> On the same day, over eighty men assembled in Chiddingfold and demanded an increase in parish wages and allowance, and assaulted William White, an overlooker of the poor.<sup>145</sup> There were further riots in Surrey; on 26<sup>th</sup> November about 100 labourers assembled in Limpsfield and marched to a farmhouse in Oxted to demand an increase in wages. Magistrates met the protesters and they quietly dispersed shortly afterwards.<sup>146</sup> By the end of November 1830 Lord Arden reported that “the insurrectionary in the county has been checked by the firm and decided conduct of the magistrates, and of Mr Crawford of

<sup>138</sup> NA ASSI 31/36 F325, ‘Assizes 1831’.

<sup>139</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘deposition of W. Wilkins 26 November 1830’.

<sup>140</sup> *The Times* 27 November 1830.

<sup>141</sup> SHC 6975/1/2, ‘Broadwood diary entry for 10 December 1830’.

<sup>142</sup> *The Times* 22 November 1830.

<sup>143</sup> Holland, *Swing unmasked* p. 5.

<sup>144</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘letter 19 November 1830’.

<sup>145</sup> *The Times* 11 December 1830.

<sup>146</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘letter 26 November 1830’.

Dorking in particular.”<sup>147</sup> He was partly correct, for although no more riots occurred in Surrey, further incidents of protest in the form of incendiary fires did break out.

### *Anonymous threatening letters*

During the Swing riots, farmers and clergymen in various parts of the country received threatening letters. The anonymous threatening letter was sometimes the work of a disgruntled individual “whose aim was to settle a personal score rather than to right a public wrong.”<sup>148</sup> Reverend Robert Lovett from Staines wrote to Lord Melbourne in December 1830 to draw his attention to the problem. Lord Melbourne assured him that if the culprits of the “infamous productions” were identified, he would give any assistance necessary to bring the offenders to justice.<sup>149</sup>

These letters warned victims of the calamity that would befall them if they refused to comply with the sender’s demands. To strengthen their demands labourers often used the threat of an arson attack. On 12<sup>th</sup> November 1830, for example, Sarah Bird, wife of John Bird of Epsom, reportedly “knowingly, wilfully and feloniously sent a letter in writing signed a certain fictitious signature” to Messrs Young, nurserymen of Epsom, threatening to burn and destroy their outhouses.<sup>150</sup> She demanded that “unless you raise the pay of the men and boys in your employment in less than five days your greenhouses shall be blown up into a thousand pieces.”<sup>151</sup> She was tried and found guilty to be hanged, but was later acquitted.<sup>152</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> November a coachman’s wife near the Rectory of Great Stanmore had refused entry to the persons knocking on her door at 9 o’clock at night, and they informed her by letter “they were incendiaries from Kent and 400 of them were

<sup>147</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘29 November 1830 Lord Ardley to Lord Melbourne’.

<sup>148</sup> Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.203.

<sup>149</sup> NA HO 41/9, ‘Letter to Reverend Robert Lovett 23 December 1830’.

<sup>150</sup> NA ASSI 94/2070 F36, ‘Assizes 1831’.

<sup>151</sup> NA ASSI 94/2070 F36, ‘Assizes 1831’.

<sup>152</sup> NA ASSI 94/2070 FF39, ‘Assizes 1831’.

coming that night.”<sup>153</sup> At a time when people feared for their lives, Mrs Langley of Kingston received an anonymous letter demanding: “[firstly] destroy your machines, second, to give your men 15s a week, third, to send out £10 by one of your servants down to the gate.”<sup>154</sup> The letter threatened that “you will see a number of fires this week in this neighbourhood...for all they can put round their premises you cannot prevent us from setting fire to them or any other premises we think proper to fire.” There were further threats, pointing out “we carry these little things about us that take life away without making any report and will throw fire balls without report also.”<sup>155</sup> Mr Tirry, the occupier of Burnt Stub mansion, Chessington Lodge, Kingston, having received a similar letter in December 1830, passed it to the Home Office. It stated “Sir, you will destroy your machines and give your men 15s a week and send out £10.”<sup>156</sup> It continued by threatening the owner that if he did not comply, fireballs that had been placed around the premises would be set alight.

### *Suppression of the outrages*

During the riots, the county authorities kept in constant communication with the Home Secretary, Lord Arden, Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, and the magistrates of Surrey wrote regularly to the Home Office.<sup>157</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1830 Lord Arden wrote to Home Secretary Peel, “It is very unpleasant to communicate events of this kind from which it seems too difficult to devise a remedy.”<sup>158</sup> He was concerned that the government might not be able to provide military assistance, as essential parts of muskets belonging to the local militia had been sent to the Tower of London for safe keeping. At the time of the unrest, troops provided “the only resource capable of policing popular disturbances” but in the autumn of 1830 the Duke of Wellington’s ministry seemed hesitant to commit them to

<sup>153</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘17 November 1830’.

<sup>154</sup> SHC *Stamp News*, 20 June - 3 July 1984, letter.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘Letter to Mr Tirry December 1830’.

<sup>157</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘Surrey file’.

<sup>158</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘5 November 1830’.

crush the unrest in Kent and Surrey.<sup>159</sup> Political developments on the continent in France and Belgium and discontent in some English large industrial towns, may have influenced the government's policy.

Only twice in Surrey, in late November 1830, were the troops called out. The first occasion was in Dorking on 19 November, when the Home Secretary directed a squadron of the first regiment of the Life Guards to be stationed near the town ready to aid the civil powers if needed to quell a riot. As a result of the Dorking disturbance the authorities in Guildford were fearful of rioting on account of the presence of large crowds at the Guildford fair. The second was on 22 November 1830, when the Second Surrey Militia stationed in Guildford was placed at the disposal of the civil authorities.<sup>160</sup> No disturbances were reported in the town that day, and the local magistrates believed that the presence of the militia "were the means of obviating riotous assemblies on the day of the fair."<sup>161</sup>

#### *Apprehend all perpetrators*

On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1830 the *County Chronicle* reported that the King had issued a proclamation that all civil officials were to do their utmost to discover, apprehend and bring to trial all perpetrators of the unrest.<sup>162</sup> Lord Grey addressed Parliament and stated "I declare that it is my determined resolution wherever outrages are perpetuated or excesses committed to suppress them with vigour."<sup>163</sup> When sixty-three Surrey magistrates met at the Spread Eagle Inn in Epsom they maintained the firm line and agreed that they would "exert themselves in their respective districts to enforce the laws

<sup>159</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing rural England* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 190-1.

<sup>160</sup> NA HO 41/8, '20 November 1830'.

<sup>161</sup> NA HO 52/10, 'letter from magistrates Guildford 29 November 1830'.

<sup>162</sup> *County Chronicle* 30 November 1830.

<sup>163</sup> NA The Mirror of Parliament 1830 IV p.311 22 November 1830.

and put down subordination.”<sup>164</sup> They also confirmed that large meetings of people would be prosecuted.<sup>165</sup>

Under an act passed in 1820, 1 Geo IV cap. 37, magistrates could appoint special constables if, on the oath of householders, they suspected an outbreak of violence or riot. After the riot in Dorking, the authorities in Guildford increased the civil power by swearing in a number of special constables, although it was reported that “the magistrates could place little reliance on them.”<sup>166</sup> By the end of November 1830 associations were being formed across Surrey, including groups at Chobham, Windlesham and Bagshot, “for the purpose of apprehending and prosecuting incendiaries and protecting the persons and properties of the neighbourhood.”<sup>167</sup> In Chobham a subscription raised £200–£300 to establish an association in the parish. “Nearly two hundred of the principal inhabitants and day-labourers cheerfully volunteered their services and were sworn in as special constables.”<sup>168</sup> In Cranleigh, landowners were recommended “to have all their labourers sworn in as special constables, if they are able to do their duty: and if any refuse to be sworn in to discharge them.”<sup>169</sup> Special constables also enrolled in Woking and Wootton, where as equipment they received truncheons, rattles and staves.<sup>170</sup> In November 1830 in Chertsey and Epsom the authorities swore in 103 and 210 special constables respectively.<sup>171</sup> The authorities hoped that these measures would quell the disturbances. The Egham vestry set up a committee of seventeen persons to organise a subscription scheme to pay for foot and horse patrols, and special constables to “maintain the security

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<sup>164</sup> *The County Chronicle* 23 November 1830.

<sup>165</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘20 November 1830’.

<sup>166</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘19 November 1830’.

<sup>167</sup> *The County Chronicle* 30 November 1830.

<sup>168</sup> *The County Chronicle* 30 November 1830.

<sup>169</sup> *The County Chronicle* 30 November 1830.

<sup>170</sup> SHC QS2/1/50–51, ‘Quarter Session order book Epiphany Session 1831’.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

and tranquillity of the parish.”<sup>172</sup> The vestry also authorized the committee to advertise rewards not exceeding £200 for information leading to arrest of the culprits.

In December 1830, Dorking established the “Dorking Constabulary Association.” As Dorking was a large market town with a population of 4,711, contemporaries realised that a large force was needed.<sup>173</sup> The plan adopted was very similar to the Duke of Richmond’s “Sussex Plan.” He enrolled a constabulary force of “respectable” labourers and organised them in sections and districts under local commanders. They were then sent out in small units to parishes in Sussex where there had been unrest or where there was the likelihood of trouble. In Dorking the constabulary force was divided into divisions, each division consisting of twenty men with a chief. A meeting of the Lord Lieutenant and several magistrates for Surrey on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1830 resolved that the Dorking scheme “be recommended to the several other benches of the county with such alteration or additions as may appear to them expedient....it be also recommended that a part of the constabulary force be mounted.”<sup>174</sup> They hoped that, as a result, the incendiaries would be apprehended and prosecuted, although Henry Drummond did not believe the special constables could be depended on to keep law and order.”<sup>175</sup> Not all landowners held this view. James Shudi Broadwood wrote in 1830 to the editor of the *County Chronicle* and proposed the establishment of constabulary force throughout the county.

“I would wish the legislature to compel every occupier of land of the annual value or renting of £80–£100 and upwards, who each employ on their farms and can command a horse, to be mounted special constable to furnish himself with a simple uniform (blue coat with red collar covering his other

<sup>172</sup> SHC Acc 1493/2, ‘Egham vestry minute book 16 November 1830’.

<sup>173</sup> E.W.Brayley, *A History of Surrey* (Dorking, Robert Best Ede, 1844).

<sup>174</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘The regulations of the Dorking constabulary 2 December 1830’.

<sup>175</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘Letter Albury Park 1 December 1830’.



usual clothing would be sufficient), his arms to consist of a sabre and a pistol.”<sup>176</sup>

The scheme was very similar to the scheme adopted in Dorking. Mounted constables were to be placed in divisions, and occupiers of lands and houses of a rentable value above the annual value of £10 were to be compelled to act as special constables under chief constables. In the event, this scheme was not adopted, but the discussions do reflect growing concern about the vulnerability of rural property from attack during the riots.

#### *Handbills and the propaganda campaign*

At the time of the Swing Riots, printed handbills were circulated throughout the county. One in October 1830 entitled “*Englishmen Read* ” was an attack on placemen and sinecures which set out the livings of the clergy and income of peers, equating to £4,611,232, “which will maintain 92,224 families at £50 a year each.” The poster pointed out “Englishmen, is it to be wondered at that the productive poor are found starving in the highways, hanging and drowning themselves to get rid of a wretched existence while certain gentlemen like the above were earning large salaries”.<sup>177</sup> It is difficult to assess the direct effect of such a poster campaign, but T. Edward Esq. of Carshalton noted in a letter to the Home Secretary that he believed the fires were often started as a result of individual malice but “ it is certain that fires have taken place immediately in concurrence with the extensive circulation of a printed paper giving a false statement of the pensions and appointments of public men.”<sup>178</sup> A propaganda campaign was waged both by those hoping to incite unrest, and by the government encouraging the parishes to remain loyal. From Horsham, local radicals printed and circulated handbills of an inflammatory nature.

<sup>176</sup> SHC 2185/212, ‘Copy letter from J. Shudi Broadwood to editor of *County Chronicle* (watermarked 1829 probably sent 1830)’.

<sup>177</sup> NA HO 48/28, ‘Poster ‘Englishmen Read’ October 1830’.

One handbill headed “*Englishmen!*” encouraged rebellion, citing the disturbances in relation to the French and Belgian revolutions:

“Remember what the French and the Belgians have done! And what a pitiless, helpless and cowardly people we seem. One hour of true liberty is worth ages of slavery! Consider, is it not more praiseworthy to meet an honourable death in defending your rights, than quietly die of starvation? Starvation stares while your oppressors are rolling in luxury and wealth.”<sup>179</sup>

How effective this campaign was is difficult to judge, but it is known the authorities took it extremely seriously. On 22<sup>nd</sup> December, William Cooper of Horsham was arrested for sticking up handbills in Dorking. He appeared before Mr Arbuthnot, a magistrate, but after making a statement, was discharged. In his statement he explained that he had distributed the handbills for Mr Steele, a grocer of Horsham, who had instructed him to take one hundred handbills and distribute them in Capel, Ockley, Bear Green and Dorking and “to put some in at every public house at Dorking, Capel and Ockley.”<sup>180</sup> In turn, the authorities cautioned the inhabitants of Capel, Ockley and Dorking not to be deceived by the handbills and to guard against “these and any other attempts of designing men, to render them the dupes of misrepresentation which can have no honest purpose or intention.”<sup>181</sup>

In November 1830 the newly installed Whig government of Lord Grey took more resolute action to suppress the disturbances. In November, Lord Melbourne issued a proclamation offering a reward of £500 for bringing rioters and incendiaries to justice. Sir Henry Hotham, the magistrate for the parish of Chertsey, requested 200 copies of the King’s proclamation, offering rewards for the conviction of incendiaries and rioters, for

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<sup>178</sup> NA HO 44/22, ‘11 November 1830’.

<sup>179</sup> NA HO 44/22, ‘Handbill ‘Englishmen’.

<sup>180</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘28 December 1830’.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

distribution in the “very large and populous” parish.<sup>182</sup> On 29<sup>th</sup> November 1830 a similar poster was distributed in Guildford. The posters pointed out that “the King has been pleased to declare that any person who shall discover the authors of such outrages shall be entitled to a reward of £50 for every such person so convicted and shall also receive His Majesty’s pardon.” A reward of £500 for persons with knowledge of “certain wicked incendiaries [who] have destroyed by fire, corn, hay, buildings and other property.”<sup>183</sup> The incentive of receiving such large rewards for information did not encourage the local population of Surrey to come forward with information. The government, in turn, circulated handbills stating the punishments to be meted out to convicted rioters and incendiaries.<sup>184</sup> In December 1830 M. Reid of Thornton Heath made an application for two or three hundred handbills. The handbills were to be circulated in the hundred of Wallington. He believed extracts from various Acts of parliament setting out the punishments to convicted rioters and incendiaries would act as a deterrent.<sup>185</sup> In 1830 Mr Crawford, a Surrey magistrate, sent one handbill entitled “*Conversation between two labourers residing in the County of Sussex*” to the Home Secretary. The conversation complained that labourers were poorly paid. “We have been working all day for 8d, living on bread and potatoes, and as for me, I can be no worse off if they won’t give us any more wages.”<sup>186</sup> The conversation goes on to complain about indirect taxation, the taxation on sugar, tea and tobacco, which then “was given to people who gave nothing in exchange for it, some fine ladies and gentlemen who like to live without work and all the time they make the working class pay the present amount of taxes.”<sup>187</sup> The civil authorities tried to counteract this campaign as they were concerned they would “excite discontent in the minds of the labouring classes and create dissatisfaction and ill-will

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<sup>182</sup> NA HO 50/10, ‘Sir Henry Hotham 26 November 1830’.

<sup>183</sup> SHC, BR/MA/1/1 ‘Poster Guildford 29 November 1830’.

<sup>184</sup> NA HO 50/10, ‘application for hand bills M. Reid Hundred of Wallington 9 December 1830’.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘enclosed in a letter of Mr Crawford 28<sup>th</sup> December 1830’.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

towards the Government.”<sup>188</sup> The magistrates of Surrey, in reply, issued their own printed handbills. One handbill stressed that:

“The Magistrates, with a view to protect the honest labourer from the mischievous designs of men, known in this case to be strangers to the county and to have no common interest with those whom they would mislead, feel themselves called upon in their characters of conservators of public peace and as the true friends of the labourers amongst whom they live, to warn them against the objects of these strangers.”<sup>189</sup> The government entirely approved of local magistrates producing printed notices to try to counteract the effects of the “mischievous handbills” and Lord Melbourne wrote to Lord Arden, Lord Lieutenant of the county, in December 1830 giving his support and approval of the campaign.<sup>190</sup>

At the same time, tracts were published “suited to the present times” in the form of dialogues or sermons advising labourers to remain loyal to their employers. These tracts denounced the rioters as evil and included *A Dialogue on rick burning, rioting etc.* in 1830, followed by *A second dialogue on rick burning, rioting and tithes. A conversation between squire Wilson, Hughes his steward, Thomas the bailiff and Harry Brown a labourer* in 1831.<sup>191</sup> It ran to twenty pages, sold for 3d a copy and was written in support of the establishment. Other titles in the series included: *A short address to plain sense on the subject of tithes; Nice pickings; A countryman’s remarks on Cobbett’s letter to the King; A sermon upon the sinfulness of popular commotion; An address to the misguided*

<sup>188</sup> SHC, DOM/9/3 ‘Handbill notice by order of the magistrates Dorking 28 December 1830.’

<sup>189</sup> NA HO 52/10, ‘28 December 1830’.

<sup>190</sup> NA HO 41/9, ‘letter to Lord Arden 30 December 1830’.

<sup>191</sup> SHC 2185/1413, ‘*A dialogue on rick burning, rioting and tithes*’ (London, C.J.G and F. Rivington, 1830) and 2185/14/14, *A second dialogue on rick burning rioting and tithes* (London, C.J. G. and F. Rivington , 1831).

*poor of the disturbed districts throughout the kingdom; A sermon upon the duty of a Christian subject.*

### *Damage and destruction*

Another poster circulated in the Egham district posed the question, what was to be gained by burning and destroying the property of gentlemen and farmers, as this would only result in ruin for the farmer and unemployment for the labourer.<sup>192</sup> The greatest damage to property was not by machine breaking or riot, but by arson. Hobsbawn & Rudé have estimated the damage liability to individual farmers ranged from between £100 and £800.<sup>193</sup> Farm owners or occupiers who were fully insured received compensation, but very few farmers were so fortunate. Moreover, the spread of incendiarism meant that insurance companies were reluctant to accept new policies or renew policies. In October 1830 The Sun Fire Insurance Company issued a directive to agents instructing them to enquire if the farmer had been sent any threatening letters, whether there were any disputes between the landlord and the workmen or were threshing machines kept or used on the premises before accepting new business.<sup>194</sup> In Surrey, as in other counties, some farmers were refused insurance cover; for example, Mr Earnshaw's application to insure farm buildings in Godstone was declined.<sup>195</sup> Other farmers were granted insurance but with large premium costs. Mr Marson of Leigh and Horley was granted cover on £2150 farm buildings and stock, 'but at a premium of 5s per cent.'<sup>196</sup> The Phoenix Fire Office ordered its agents to charge double premiums on all farming policies in Kent, Sussex and Surrey.<sup>197</sup> Victims of arson who failed to gain redress from insurance companies sometimes recouped some of their losses from private subscriptions, or if they qualified

<sup>192</sup> *Windsor Eton Express* 27 November 1830.

<sup>193</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 224.

<sup>194</sup> Guildhall Library, London Sun Fire Insurance *Minute Book* MS 11,935 8 October 1830.

<sup>195</sup> Guildhall Library, London Hand in Hand Insurance Co MS 8666/34 November 1830.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.226.

received a share of the £500 awards offered by the government. In Surrey, James Franks, a mill owner, was awarded £190 after the attack on his property.<sup>198</sup>

### *Arrest and trial*

In Surrey, rioters were tried at the Special Assizes. Between 1830–1832 the Assizes tried eighteen men for being riotously or tumultuously assembled. Six of these were found guilty and imprisoned for periods of between six to eighteen months, and two were imprisoned for three months for disorder and assault. Three men were tried for arson and later acquitted, and two for sending threatening letters who were also acquitted. James Warner was the only man in Surrey to be found guilty and executed.<sup>199</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé have estimated the total number of prisoners tried was 1,976.<sup>200</sup> Compared with the other counties affected by the riots, the number of convictions in Surrey seems insignificant, but it must be remembered that most acts of arson went undetected, and the general sense of fear felt across the county during the years 1830–32 cannot be underestimated.

### *Conclusion*

The unrest of 1830–32 forced farmers and those in authority in the parishes to recognise that a breakdown in relations had occurred between landowners and labourers. Increasing numbers of labourers had become pauperised. By 1830 there was more “substantial life-cycle and point-in-time poverty” than ever before.<sup>201</sup> The unrest experienced in rural Surrey and in other southern counties was in part “a reflection of endemic need amongst rural labourers”, and the parish and the government needed to consider again the provision of welfare.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>198</sup> NA 1/4193–4.

<sup>199</sup> NA ASSI 94/2070 1830; ASSI 94/2100 1831; ASSI 94/2134 1832 Assize Records.

<sup>200</sup> Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 262.

<sup>201</sup> S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 229.

<sup>202</sup> King, *Poverty*, p. 229.

## Chapter Nine

### 1830 to 1834 The Immediate Reaction To the Swing Riots

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The “Swing riots rocked the foundation of English landed society”, put the “fear of revolution into the hearts of the English governing class” and, to many, posed a threat to social stability.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the agitation did not stop in 1830 and sporadic attacks on property continued into the winter of 1832, proving that “not all the labourers had been demoralised by the terror of the special commission.”<sup>2</sup> As noted in Chapter Six, increasing numbers of ratepayers attributed their own economic difficulties to the need to pay increasing rates to provide poor relief. After the Swing riots landowners were more willing to pay more money if it guaranteed social stability.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will examine these changing attitudes and the policies introduced to alleviate the suffering.

#### *Change of attitude*

Some historians have observed how the riots speeded reform, pointing out how much the strength and resolve of the labourers’ activities’ had shocked farmers and landlords.<sup>4</sup> Daunton has noted that “the initial response to the Swing riots was to offer more generous relief .... with the expectation that it would purchase order and deference.”<sup>5</sup> Landowners and parish officials recognised the need to conciliate the labourers. Newby believes that “many landowners acknowledged some degree of culpability and began to repair their

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<sup>1</sup> R. Wells, ‘Historical trajectories: English social welfare systems, rural riots, popular politics, agrarian trade unions and allotment provision 1793- 1896’, *Southern History*, 25 (2003) 99, and S. Webb and B. Webb (1929) *English poor law history Part II: The last hundred years* (London, Longmans Green, 1929), p.45.

<sup>2</sup> E. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), p.283.

<sup>3</sup> J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (London, Croom Helm, 1985), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing rural England tradition and transformation in local government 1780–1840* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 161-2 and J. Burchardt, *The allotment movement in England 1793–1873* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2002) Chapter 3 pp.70-97 also Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp.281– 299.

<sup>5</sup> M.J. Daunton, *Progress and poverty; An economic and social history of Britain 1700 –1850* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), p.492.

authority by applying an analgesic to the problems of rural distress.”<sup>6</sup> Dunkley concurs, stressing that landowners recognised the need to show interest in the welfare of labourers in southern England.<sup>7</sup> Now there was a much greater interest and concern for the welfare of parish labourers, which produced immediate wage concessions by employers and more generous relief from parish overseers.<sup>8</sup> Whether this was due to altruism or enlightened self-interest on the part of landowners, or to protect their property from attack, is difficult to ascertain, but it is possible to identify a change in attitude among them. Neumann has observed that in Berkshire in the winter of 1830 “some parishes retained, or even enhanced, indiscriminate allowances which they would otherwise have discarded.”<sup>9</sup> Surrey exhibited a similar picture. In 1828 for example, Henry Drummond had reportedly stopped his own poor tenants from cutting juniper, hollies or furze on the wastes, had intended to drive non-tenant stock off the downs and had enclosed eight acres of common land.<sup>10</sup> His attitude mellowed after the insurrections of 1830, as illustrated in a letter he wrote to William Bray of Shere in 1832:

“The rising of the labourers that is taking place throughout the southern counties of England threatens the destruction of all property. They are maddened by oppression and, chiefly, from the high price of cottage rents, they are determined to take the law into their own hands and say that they prefer being hanged or shot to continuing as they are. In these circumstances it is our duty, as well as our interest, to do what we can to obviate their distemper. It is very well known that it is not profitable to build cottages to pay any interest for the money so employed and therefore that whoever does build must build at a loss. I am willing to view this loss, and if

<sup>6</sup> H. Newby, *Country life a social history of England* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), p.46.

<sup>7</sup> P. Dunkley, *The crisis of the old poor law in England 1795–1834* (New York and London, Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> A. Digby, *The poor law in nineteenth century England* (London, The Chameleon Press, 1982), p.10.

<sup>9</sup> M. Neumann, *The Speenhamland county poverty and poor laws in Berkshire 1792–1834* (New York, Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 191.

<sup>10</sup> SHC 1191/2, ‘A. Brown, *Notes on the Parish of Albury 1662–1891* (notebook).



you will grant me a copyhold lease of 20 acres on Shere Heath I will build twenty cottages, which I will undertake to let only to the labourers of your parish. As it is a great point to take some step before they shall be able to say that we do this from intimidation".<sup>11</sup>

After the riots, Surrey ratepayers made fewer complaints in vestry meetings about their rating bills, as they were more concerned to restore domestic tranquillity. In the short-term, ratepayers' hostility towards the rising cost of poor relief gave way to the more pressing concern to provide work and to alleviate the hardship of the poor. In his report on Surrey in 1835, Mott commented on the increasing burden of providing for the able-bodied poor. He noted that in Caterham, Mr Moore, the assistant overseer, grumbled that as a result of incendiary fires the rates had increased and "the officers cannot control the money actually expended on the poor."<sup>12</sup> In the winter of 1831 the Thames Ditton vestry established a committee of fifteen ratepayers which organised a collection "for the purpose of adding to the comforts of the poor."<sup>13</sup> In 1832, when some of Epsom's ratepayers complained about their assessments the vestry considered revising assessments but due to the large number of unemployed poor, insisted on this occasion, any reduction was impossible. Instead, the vestry formed a committee to consider the best means of employing the poor during the ensuing winter to avoid escalating relief bills.<sup>14</sup>

This change of attitude is also evident in the Egham vestry which, in the winter of 1832, told the parish officials that "although the wages should be kept down to induce these men to look out for work elsewhere, they should on no account be treated as paupers merely

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<sup>11</sup> SHC Private papers Sir Jocelyn Bray, H. Drummond letter to William Bray Private Papers Sir Jocelyn Bray 1820.

<sup>12</sup> First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales XXIX 1836, Evidence W. Mott Poor Law Commissioner for Surrey Report Appendix B No.8 p. 312.

<sup>13</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, 'Thames Ditton vestry minutes 22 December 1831'.

<sup>14</sup> SHC 3296/3/1, 'Epsom vestry minutes 5 October 1832'.

because they cannot find work and are therefore employed by the parish.”<sup>15</sup> The Chobham vestry made a similar statement in the winter of 1832–33, proposing to set up a subscription scheme to provide help for the many poor families in the parish. The overseers collected £13 to provide loaves of bread to “deserving characters”. They added that others in distress who could not be considered by the overseers as deserving persons, in “extreme cases” should be allowed small allowances.<sup>16</sup> The tone of these statements is interesting. Before 1830, overseers discriminated between the “deserving and idle extravagant or profligate poor” when distributing relief, but now many parishes were willing to consider all claimants.<sup>17</sup> After the riots, many vestries recognised the need to consider the welfare of all labourers in order to avoid further trouble, although the reaction in the parishes to Swing was “uneven and short lived”.<sup>18</sup> This was the case in Surrey where, immediately after the riots, relief costs did rise, and for a short time ratepayers agreed to pay increased poor rates in return for domestic tranquillity (see Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 *Surrey total expenditure and per capita spending for the years 1828–34*

Year Ending 25 <sup>th</sup> March	Total Expenditure On Poor Relief In Surrey (£000)	Per Capita
1828–29	£243.4	0.52
1829–30	£265.5	0.56
1830–31	£265.4	0.55
1831–32	£283.3	0.57
1832–33	£278.4	0.55
1833–34	£261.5	0.51

Source: Abstract of Returns for Surrey 1834 xxxii (32) 349-350; 1834xlili (355) pp.402–3.

<sup>15</sup> SHC 2516/2/10, ‘Egham vestry minutes 2 January 1832’.

<sup>16</sup> SHC P34/box 2, ‘Chobham parish records winter 1832–1833’.

<sup>17</sup> 1819 59 Geo.3, c.12.

<sup>18</sup> Neumann, *The Speenhamland*, p. 191.

*Held to ransom*

The post-Swing period was a time of high social tension, with increasing unemployment and underemployment of agricultural labourers in the rural southeast. In 1831 the new Whig government made it clear that they thought that the rioters of 1830 had held the agrarian counties to ransom. Under threat of further violence, ratepayers, employers and, parish officials had to a certain extent given way to labourers' demands by raising wages and relief allowances.<sup>19</sup> Melbourne expressed his concern that acquiescence by the parish authorities had "a permanently bad effect upon the character of the agricultural population and compromised the ability of the rural leadership to govern in the localities."<sup>20</sup> Senior also remarked that he believed agricultural property could not support indefinitely the higher wages: "sooner or later these promises [of higher wages] must be broken and the peasantry will rise again."<sup>21</sup>

*The need for action*

The parish replies to the 1833 Rural Queries, question 53, "*Can you give the commissioners any information respecting the causes and consequences of the agricultural riots and burnings of 1830 and 1831*" clearly reveals the reasons for the riots.<sup>22</sup> From Surrey, twenty-nine parishes replied, but nine of these did not answer this specific question. Although only a very small sample, the most popular answers from Surrey mirrored the national response: across the country 48% of all answers "concluded that unemployment and wage levels were the real trigger for protest."<sup>23</sup> There were those who recognised that positive measures needed to be taken to alleviate the suffering of the

<sup>19</sup> Royal Archives Windsor Box 5/9 Melbourne Papers, 'Lord Grey/Lord Melbourne 29 August 1832'.

<sup>20</sup> Lord Melbourne/Duke of Wellington 10 November 1832 in L. C. Sanders (ed), *Lord Melbourne Papers* (London, Longmans, Green and Co, 1899), p.152.

<sup>21</sup> S. L. Levy, *Nassau W. Senior 1790–1834* (London, David Charles, 1970), p.70.

<sup>22</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX Question 53 pp. 474e–88e.

<sup>23</sup> M. Holland, 'The Captain Swing Project' in M. Holland (ed), *Swing unmasked the agricultural riots of 1830 to 1832 and their wider implications* (Milton Keynes, FACHRS Publications, 2005), p. 20.

poor. Mr Poulett Scrope, an agricultural writer, recognised that “labourers have received too little wages, and parish allowance must be immediately raised.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, William Cobbett gave a lecture at the Rotunda on the present condition of agricultural labourers. He highlighted their plight, claiming that “no body of the people except the Irish had ever been so ill used as English labourers” and he stated that the “struggle between labour and employment would never cease until the labourer got the worth of his toil.”<sup>25</sup> The government also responded by introducing legislation to set up parish labour schemes and provision for allotments, to enable parishes to provide land and work to the unemployed.

*The government’s response: support of allotments*

Burchardt has identified a “sudden and widespread upsurge of interest and activity” in allotment provision after 1830.<sup>26</sup> He points out that the idea of providing land to labourers was not new, noting an interest in allotments at the end of the eighteenth century, which declined after 1805. As a result, there is very little information on allotment provision in the south of England before 1830. He concludes, “there is little doubt that the immediate cause of the dramatic upsurge in the number of allotments .... was the Captain Swing riots of 1830.”<sup>27</sup> The incentive to increase the “wellbeing, industriousness and contentment” of the agricultural labourer, and the need to decrease the poor rate burden resulted in a resurgence of interest.<sup>28</sup> This contrasts with the years 1819–1830 when parliament showed very little interest in allotment provision.

Speaking in the House of Lords on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1830, Lord Sheffield emphasised the effectiveness of allotments in keeping down poor rates. In the House of Commons,

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<sup>24</sup> *County Chronicle* Poulett Scrope 14 December 1830.

<sup>25</sup> W. Cobbett, *Brighton Herald* 18 December 1830.

<sup>26</sup> Burchardt, *The allotment movement*, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Briscoe, an MP for Surrey, also spoke in favour of allotment provision.<sup>29</sup> Later in the month (22<sup>nd</sup> November) the Marquis of Salisbury moved for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the present state of the Poor Laws. He complained of the breaking up of small farms and the enclosure of wastelands, as well as the lack of sedentary employment for the wives and children of the peasantry. In doing so, he “appeared to attribute to those causes much of the deterioration which the class of labouring population hourly exhibit.” His recommendation was that “the hopes of the labouring poor should be raised and the original intention of the Poor Laws should be carried into effect.”<sup>30</sup> The government agreed to this Tory initiative, with the establishment of a select committee to investigate social welfare.<sup>31</sup> The committee considered the plight of the agricultural labourer, and in his report on Surrey, Chapman, a land agent and surveyor, commented that if labourers were given between two and four acres of land to cultivate, it would enable them to feed their families and decrease their dependence on the poor rates.<sup>32</sup> The published report supported both allotments and the parochial resort to labour rates.

In the summer of 1831, Parliament expressed concern that high levels of rural unemployment could result in further discontent during the coming winter. The response was the passing of three separate acts of Parliament relating to allotment provision and parochial employment by spade husbandry. The first of these was an act which amended the 1819 Sturges-Bourne’s Select Vestries Act, and extended the enclosure limit from twenty to fifty acres. Overseers and churchwardens could now rent or hire land not exceeding fifty acres for cultivation by the poor or for leasing to them as allotments. They could also enclose for the same purpose (with consent of the lord of the manor, or other persons) any portions of waste or common land (in or near the parish) “to any poor and

<sup>29</sup> Lord Suffield Parliamentary Debates 11<sup>th</sup> November 1830 3<sup>rd</sup> Series i col 375 and J. Briscoe 19<sup>th</sup> November 1830 3<sup>rd</sup> Series I col 600, BPP.

<sup>30</sup> Marquis of Salisbury 1830 House Lords Proceedings 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1830.

<sup>31</sup> Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Poor Laws VIII 1830–1 .

<sup>32</sup> Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Poor Laws VIII 1830–1 , Evidence for Surrey T. Chapman p.338.

industrious inhabitant or inhabitants of the parish” with the proviso that the latter could not gain settlement by leasing the land.<sup>33</sup> The second, allowed parish authorities to enclose crown land up to fifty acres (with the consent of the Treasury) for the benefit of the settled poor of the parish.<sup>34</sup> In 1832 a further act authorised parishes to let such land (at a fair rent and in small allotments) to “industrious cottagers of good character”. These were portions of land made over in trust to the poor collectively to compensate for lost rights of fuel gathering as a result of enclosure.<sup>35</sup> In Surrey, the only two early allotments directly linked to this legislation appear to be those in Walton-on-Thames, where allotments of between one quarter of an acre to one acre were rented out on a yearly basis to “industrious cottagers of good character, being day labourers or journeymen legally settled in the parish.”<sup>36</sup> At Chobham, the vestry converted thirty-two acres of wasteland, partly into a parish farm and partly into allotments, to be let out to poor labourers of the parish.<sup>37</sup> The churchwardens and overseers “set out for the said poor labourers who applied for the same and were found proper persons, to have such parcels of waste land, most of half an acre, at an annual rent 1s per rod.”<sup>38</sup> In his report, Maclean noted that about fifty labourers worked these allotments of half an acre of wasteland.<sup>39</sup> The committee set up to manage the allotments, aware that in the first season the labourers had “no funds in hand to crop it”, proposed to raise a sum of approximately £30 by voluntary subscription to manure and plant the land.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> 59 George III Cap xii 1819; 1 and 2 William IV C 42 1831

<sup>34</sup> 1 and 2 Will IV c 59 1831

<sup>35</sup> 2 William IV c 42 1832

<sup>36</sup> SHC 605/1/1, ‘Walton on Thames Allotments Orders 1 June 1832 also confirmed R. Ruegg work on FACHRS Allotment project 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004 and Onslow, *Landlords and Allotments* (London, Longman Green and Company 1886).

<sup>37</sup> Act 59 George III Cap xii 1819; 1 and 2 William IV C 42 1831 and SHC P34/box 2 Chobham Poor Land 6 January 1832 also P34/box 2 32 acres enclosed 1832 and 10 acres 1842.

<sup>38</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX, Reply to Question 20 Chobham p.477c.

<sup>39</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 577A.

<sup>40</sup> SHC P34/box 2, ‘Chobham Poor Land 6 January 1832’.

*Co-operative action*

Burchardt has identified this upsurge of interest in co-operative activity after 1830, which resulted in the formation of the Labourers' Friend Society (LFS) to promote allotment provision, and the founding of the Agricultural Employment Institute (AEI).<sup>41</sup> The aim of the AEI was to purchase land and let it to labourers, while the LFS was "instituted in hope of improving conditions of labourers generally, and of providing those in agricultural districts with small allotments of land."<sup>42</sup> It sought to persuade landowners to let land to labourers for spade husbandry, with the intention of reducing or eradicating poor law dependency. In 1834 the AEI failed, but the LFS, which held their first public meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1832, continued to prosper, and obtained royal patronage and support from the landed elite. The LFS published a monthly magazine which contained detailed information about allotments, and this was directed at landowners and clergymen.<sup>43</sup> In addition, the LFS employed G.W. Perry as an agent, and he travelled extensively on behalf of the society. In 1832 he visited Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Wiltshire. The 1834 report recorded visits to Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Surrey and Sussex over the course of the year.<sup>44</sup> His job was to contact potential supporters, lecture on the benefits of allotments, form local societies and gain new subscribers for the society.<sup>45</sup>

Some Surrey landowners were very involved with the society. In February 1832 J.I. Briscoe and W. J. Denison, two Surrey MPs, were appointed as vice presidents of the LFS, and in August 1832 Hon. Rev. Arthur Onslow from Clandon became a vice president. Briscoe commented that he believed the society "is calculated to confer benefit

<sup>41</sup> Burchardt, *The allotment movement*, pp. 51–2.

<sup>42</sup> LMA Acc/3445/SIC/01/05, 'proceedings of the Labourers' Friend Society 1832–36, p.7–8'.

<sup>43</sup> LMA, *Facts and Illustrations later Labourer's Friend Magazine*.

<sup>44</sup> LMA Acc/3445/SIC/01/05, 'Proceedings of the Labourers' Friend Society 1832–36'.

<sup>45</sup> Burchardt, *The allotment movement*, p.88.

on the landlord and tenant of the soil as well as the labourer.”<sup>46</sup> Landowners from across rural Surrey contributed to the LFS, and local societies sprang up in the Guildford, Farnham, Godalming, Bagshot and Epsom areas, to promote and circulate information on the best methods of establishing allotments for the labouring classes. In Bagshot, Maclean reported that the “liberality of His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester has enabled this society to commence its benevolent intentions.”<sup>47</sup> The society offered labourers between forty and fifty rods of land and advanced money to them to purchase manure and seed.<sup>48</sup> When the society was formed in Epsom in 1834, twenty-one large landowners met under the chairmanship of Henry Gosse to support the granting of allotments, “a system by which the moral and physical condition of the labouring classes may be raised and ameliorated through the medium of their own exertions.”<sup>49</sup> In his report on Surrey, Majendie praised the acquisition of allotment, by labourers as beneficial to “their character and conduct” and warned “the denial of land to them will constantly produce an increase of ill-feeling on their part.”<sup>50</sup> A listing of contributors to the LFS for Surrey (see Table 9.2) clearly shows the support of large landowners and the local clergy:

<sup>46</sup> LMA Acc/3445/SIC/01/05, ‘Proceedings of the Labourers’ Friend Society 1832–36 p. 19.’

<sup>47</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p.576A .

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Epsom meeting 17 March 1834, *Labourers’ Friend Magazine*, (London, T. C. Savill, 1834), p. 81.

<sup>50</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey A. Majendie p.170A .



THE IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE SWING RIOTS 1830 to 1834

Table 9.2 *Supporters Of The LFS In Surrey 1832–1836*

Name	Parish	1832 Contributions	1833 Contributions	1834 Contributions
Rev. Ayling	Guildford	5s		10s
Sir H. Austin	Guildford			10s Donation
Sir George Barlow	Farnham	£2 2s	£2 2s	£2 2s
W. Beckford	Cobham			10s
Rev. Beloe	Guildford	5s		10s
C. Booker	Farnham	5s		
J. I. Briscoe MP		£2 2s	£5	
Mr Crump	Farnham		5s	5s
Rev. Cole	Farnham			10s Donation
W. Colton	Leatherhead			10s
Rev. Demainbray	Richmond Green	5s	10s	10s
W. Denison MP			£2	
W. Elkins	Guildford	10s		10s
J. Ellery	Godalming			10s Donation
W. Fell	Mitcham			10s
D. Finnimore	Farnham	5s		10s
A .Friend	Farnham			5s
J. Gardener	Godalming	5s	5s	5s Plus 10s Donation
Gosse	Epsom		£2 2s	£2 2s
W. Gower	Godstone			£1
G. Haines	Godalming	5s	5s	5s Plus 10s Donation
J. Haydon	Guildford	£1		10s
W. Hazell	Farnham	5s	5s	5s
Rev. Hume	Farnham	5s		
W. Keene	Godalming	5s		10s
R. Kidd	Godalming	10s	10s	10s
Lord King	Guildford			£5 Donation
W. King	Guildford	5s		5s
G. Knight	Farnham	5s	5s	5s
J. Leach	Godalming			£2 2s Donation
J. Ledbetter	Farnham	5s	5s	5s
Rev. Lowndes	Farnham	10s	5s	5s
Rev. Johnson	Farnham			10s
H. Marshall	Godalming	10s		10s
W. Mellersch	Farnham	5s	5s	5s
Miller	Farnham	10s	10s	10s
R. Moline	Godalming	10s	10s	10s
W. Newland	Guildford	£1		10s
Newham	Farnham		5s	
S. Park	Leatherhead			10s

# THE IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE SWING RIOTS 1830 to 1834

W. Payne	Farnham	5s	5s	5s
J. Perry	Godalming	5s		10s
Capt. Prescott	Farnham	5s		
Rev. Poynter				10s Donation
Rev. A. Onslow	Ripley		10s	10s
Rev. W. Onslow	Ripley	10s		10s
Baroness de Rolle	Godalming			10s Donation
J. Shotter	Farnham	10s	10s	10s
G. Smallpiece	Godalming			10s Donation
J. Smallpiece	Godalming			10s Donation
G. Smith	Farnham	5s		5s
W. Sparks	Guildford	£1		£1
I. Stevens	Farnham	10s	5s	
R. Sumner	Puttenham	10s		
Thresher	Farnham		5s	10s
Rev. Ward	Clandon			10s
I. Wheale	Godalming		5s	5s
J. Wheale	Godalming			5s Donation
W. Wubin				10s Donation
I. Wilcke	Guildford	5s		5s
B. Wills	Camberwell	£1 1s		
B. Wood	Godalming			10s Donation
C. Woods	Godalming			10s Donation
W. Young				10s Donation
Bishop Winchester				£2 2s

Source: LMA Acc/3445/SIC/01/05, Proceedings of the Labourers' Friend Society 1832–6

It is possible to identify the existence of some other grants of land, from the replies to the Rural Queries and from references in vestry minutes.<sup>51</sup> In Farnham, a “considerable land is let to poor men in quantities of half an acre to two acres at £2 to £5 an acre” and a few farmers also gave permission for men to grow potatoes on their land.<sup>52</sup> In Godalming, the vestry set aside fifteen acres for rent by forty tenants, and the Mickleham vestry apportioned allotments on the church land which they offered to thirteen paupers to be

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Labour Rate Schemes Poor Appendix D xxxviii Surrey pp. 55D–73 D.

<sup>52</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX, Evidence Farnham Question 20 p.480c and Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p. 576A.

“cultivated with spade husbandry and cropped with potatoes.” In November 1831 the Caterham vestry agreed to employ the poor in digging and trenching ground for the planting potatoes. Thomas Ellis, a farmer, declined to “set out land without receiving £4 in addition to the rent”, the issue was resolved when Mr Pinder Simpson, a victim of the Swing riots, set apart one field for the employment of the poor and agreed to receive no rent.<sup>53</sup> Drewitt reported in 1833 that Guildford farmers were now “more willing to grant land” to labourers, but he gave no further details, only stating that, as a proprietor, he allowed his labourers “between thirty and sixty roods”.<sup>54</sup> Smallpiece reported three years later that in the Guildford area “we have more spade husbandry and we have allotments of land for the poor in many instances, and the cultivation of potatoes has enabled them to keep a pig or two and that has increased their comfort.”<sup>55</sup> In his report in 1843, Vaughan, a special assistant poor law commissioner, referred to a variety of allotments in the Reigate area “sometimes as an occupation of ground by the labourer, occasionally as a potato cultivation of the farmer’s land.”<sup>56</sup>

George Sumner of Clandon and a great supporter of the LFS in 1834, wrote a detailed article for the LFS magazine explaining the practices he had adopted on his estate. He stated that he let out small portions of land to eighteen tenants, fourteen held half an acre and four one quarter, concluding that “I am satisfied that the resources of every family who hold these gardens are greatly increased by the use of them.”<sup>57</sup> Sumner also allowed these tenants to grow wheat or another white straw crop on a quarter of the land, and let them sell the surplus of any potato crop. He encouraged his tenants to keep a pig, but recognised that in the autumn the capital required to pay half a year’s rent for a cottage prohibited any purchase of livestock. To overcome this problem he had initiated a plan

<sup>53</sup> Wells, ‘Historical trajectories’, p.103 and SHC MIC/9/2, ‘Mickleham vestry minutes 24 March 1832’, also LA2/2/21, ‘Caterham Vestry Minutes 28 November 1831’.

<sup>54</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Evidence T. Drewitt Question 10249 p.479.

<sup>55</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Causes and Extent of Agricultural Distress VIII 1836, Evidence of G. Smallpiece Question 3075 p.150.

<sup>56</sup> Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture XII 1843, Evidence R. Vaughan p.143.

<sup>57</sup> Report G. Holme Sumner, *Labourers’ Friend Magazine* (London; T C Savill, 1834), p.52.

three years earlier, whereby a farmer in the village priced and labelled the pigs for sale on the Sumner estate and then sold them to his tenants over a three monthly period. He also allowed his tenants to buy a cow on the same terms, but over a period of two years. As a result, he was able to report that cottage tenants on his meadowland kept eleven cows. Unfortunately, although it appears that many parishes did introduce some type of land provision immediately after the Swing riots, they did not all survive for long. In 1843 Vaughan reported that allotments had been tried in most parts of Sussex, Surrey and Kent but now “few [districts] in which they can be said to be general”<sup>58</sup> although the allotment movement continued to flourish.<sup>59</sup>

*The need for the vestries to provide worthwhile labour*

In numerous parishes in Surrey, vestries now took positive action to try and alleviate the suffering among the unemployed poor and provide employment. Various minute books report on urgent parish discussions concerning the matter. After the riots, many parishes realised that setting men to work on the roads and in the gravel pits to solve the problem of surplus labour only demoralized the rural workforce. Majendie reported, the poor referred to such work as “convict-labour.”<sup>60</sup> Instead of just providing work on the roads and in gravel pits, parishes increasingly considered the viability of offering more worthwhile labour, such as spade labour, on parish land or on land leased by the parish.

It can be seen in Table 9.3 that the parish vestries of Banstead, Cranleigh, Dorking, Esher and Egham provided land. In Dorking a special vestry met to ascertain if any portions of land were available for rent for the employment of the poor, while in Esher the vestry completed a survey of wasteland in the parish in order to find out the “best situation for the

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<sup>58</sup> Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture XII 1843, Evidence R. Vaughan for Surrey p.143.

<sup>59</sup> Burchardt, *The allotment movement*, pp.217–30.

<sup>60</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey A. Majendie p. 170A.

cultivation and employment of the poor". Parish officials in Godalming, anxious to find work for unemployed labourers during the ensuing winter, held a special vestry meeting in November 1830 to discuss the best methods of employing the poor. They also asked landowners to make jobs available and seven landowners offered work ranging from grubbing and digging to work in a stone pit.<sup>61</sup>

Table 9.3 *The provision of spade labour by Surrey parishes 1830–1834*

Parish	Date	Provision
Banstead	1834	3 Acres Set Aside Attached To Workhouse
Cranleigh	1833	150 Acres of Wasteland
Dorking	1829	Discussed The Possibility Of Providing Land
Esher	1832	Completed A Parish Survey Of Wasteland
Egham	1831	In The Autumn: Pieces Of Waste Ground Obtained Across The Parish, 4 Acres In Knowle Hill Area, Egham Field, 8 Acres At Shrubs Hill

Source: SHC 2375/2/1 October 1834 Banstead Vestry Minutes, P58/1/1 16<sup>th</sup> September 1833 Cranleigh Vestry Minutes, DOM/9/3 27<sup>th</sup> October Dorking Special Vestry Meeting 1829, 238/ES/9/3 12<sup>th</sup> April 1832 Esher Vestry Minutes, 2516/2/10 16<sup>th</sup> May 1831, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1831, 5<sup>th</sup> December 1831, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1832 Egham Vestry Minutes.

The same sense of urgency to provide work can also be seen in the large parish of Egham where several farmers had experienced a number of incendiary fires. In May 1831 a new committee had the task of finding land in the parish for the employment of the poor, while the overseers applied to certain land owners to rent small pieces of land to the parish. By the autumn of 1831, small pieces of ground had been obtained across the parish. Labourers grew potatoes for the use of the parish on some of this land and these were later sold at public auction.<sup>62</sup> The Egham vestry reported in December 1831 that wage rates for labour "on the poor allotments was as low as possible" and only labourers with no other work were to be employed, an encouragement for labourers to find their own work before reverting to the parish for assistance. Owing to insufficient employment opportunities on the allotments, the overseers had to continue employing some men on

<sup>61</sup> SHC 2253/11/1, 'Godalming special vestry minutes 24 November 1830'.

<sup>62</sup> SHC 2516/2/10, 'Egham vestry minutes 16 May 1831, 3 October 1831, 5 December 1831 and 2 January 1832'.

the roads and in digging gravel. Even after this concerted effort, the overseers still had to report to the vestry in February 1832 that there was still remaining a “large body of labourers out of employ.”<sup>63</sup> It was only in June 1832 with the greater availability of summer farm work, that parish officers were able to inform labourers they now had to find their own employment. By the autumn of 1832, the vestry again discussed the employment of labourers for the coming winter. It not only decided to use the same three sites as the previous year but also tried to obtain land in the Englefield Green area to employ men of that district. The vestry also confirmed they would follow the policy of the previous winter “of finding work for all able-bodied labourers instead of giving parochial relief” as they believed such a system deterred the idle from applying for parochial assistance “when they found they must work for it.”<sup>64</sup>

### *The labour rate*

The introduction of the labour rate was another method used to employ surplus labour.<sup>65</sup> Although variations of this device were in use before 1832 (see Chapter 4), it was not until August of that year that Parliament gave parishes statutory power to apply a labour rate. The scheme, introduced for the better employment of labourers in agricultural parishes, was to run until 25<sup>th</sup> March 1834. Wells has seen this as “one of the few measures directly addressing Swing’s grievances” and a stop-gap measure by the Whig government before the reform of the poor law system.<sup>66</sup> The Labourers’ Employment Act of 1832 provided a statutory framework for permissive vestry adoption of labour rates, although on a temporary basis. In order for a parish to adopt the labour rate, three, quarters of ratepayers of a parish had to agree to the introduction of the measure “solely for the

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘6 February 1832’.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘5 December 1831, 6 February 1832, 4 June 1832 and 16 November 1832’.

<sup>65</sup> J.P. Huzel, ‘The labourer and the poor law 1750–1850’ in Mingay G.E.(ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1750 -1850* 6 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,1989), p. 782.

<sup>66</sup> R. Wells, (1993) ‘Migration the law and parochial policy in eighteenth and nineteenth century southern England’ *Southern History*, 15 (1993) 117.

purpose of employing or relieving the poor of the parish.”<sup>67</sup> The act stated that “whereas in many parishes ...it has been the custom to pay to labourers and others less than the common rate of wages for their labour and to make up the deficiency from the poor rates”<sup>68</sup>, the authorities now viewed this practice as unacceptable. Parish officers calculated the labour rate, estimating the cost of relieving the able-bodied unemployed for a period of time set by the vestry. Each ratepayer then had the option of paying the rate or employing men at the specified wage. At the end of the period the wage bill was compared to his assessment, and if he had paid in full his assessment for the labour rate in wages, he was excused payment of the rate. If there was a shortfall, he was required to pay over the balance to the overseer. In parishes where the labour rates operated, it must be noted that the poor relief figures returned to central government at the end of each financial year only reflect the actual monies the parish paid directly in poor relief. They do not include the payments made to the poor from the labour rate. Unfortunately, for all the Surrey parishes which operated the labour rate there are no surviving final accounts. This does help to explain how parishes were able to maintain relief costs or even reduce costs and at the same time relieve more able-bodied labourers (see Appendix 9).

Huzel points out that in 1832 the labour rate was more prevalent than either the Speenhamland or roundsman systems, and “especially in rural southern counties.”<sup>69</sup> Approximately twenty per cent of the grain, producing parishes, responded to the Rural Queries acknowledged that they had used labour rates in winter months.<sup>70</sup> The poor law commissioners reported the full details of some schemes, as at Albury, Great Bookham, Bletchingley, Cranleigh, Elstead, Farnham, Frensham, West Horsley, Worplesdon,

<sup>67</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> William IV 1832 c.96 for the better employment of labourers in agricultural parishes p.2

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>69</sup> Huzel, ‘The labourer’, p. 782.

<sup>70</sup> M. Blaug, ‘The poor law report re-examined’ *The Journal of Economic History*, 24 (1964) pp.236–7.

Woking, Send and Ripley<sup>71</sup> (see Table 9.4). There were many others. Careful examination of vestry minutes and accounts indicates that the parishes of Abinger, Betchworth, Ewell, Godstone, Godalming, Horley and Shere also participated (see Table 9.5). Most schemes ran for periods of six weeks and, where necessary, carried on, sometimes on different terms. It has been possible to identify 19 labour schemes, but there may have been more, as Maclean commented in Surrey a “great portion of the distressed agricultural parishes” introduced the labour rate.<sup>72</sup> It has been impossible to find evidence of any further schemes but it is evident that of the 19 identified, they predominately operated in the south of the county (see Map 9.6). Unfortunately, many of these records are incomplete as only the parishes of Farnham and Shere possess complete detailed records of labour rate schemes in operation (see Appendixes 10 and 11).

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<sup>71</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Labour Rate Schemes Poor Appendix D xxxviii Surrey pp. 55D–73D.

<sup>72</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners’ Report for Surrey C. Maclean p. 554A .



Table 9.4                      OPERATION OF LABOUR RATE IN SURREY FROM RETURNS ROYAL COMMISSIONERS:  
REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSIONERS POOR LAW REPORT 1834 APPENDIX D xxxviii(44): SURREY pp 55D-73D

PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
ALBURY	26 November –21 January 1833	12 –14 yrs 6d per day 14 –16 yrs 8d per day 16–18 yrs 1s per day 18–20 yrs 1s 4d per day 20 yrs upwards 1s 8d per day	5s in £, any son over 16 yrs employed by parent as labourer allowance to be made, if expenditure in wages for labour is less than sum rated the money due to be submitted to the overseer; no allowance made for payment of wages above the agreed scale
GREAT BOOKHAM	Michaelmas 1830– Michaelmas 1832	no details	Every 12s paid to labourer an allowance of 10s made to the employer out of his rate; those who had advantage of the labour paid 1/6 more than those who had no land or means of employing labour; landholder not to discharge regular labourers a list of labourers in employment drawn up.
BLETCHINGLEY	18 December 1832 for 6 weeks 6 February 1833 for 6 weeks	Boys under 16 yrs 8d per day 16– 20 yrs 12d per day 20–25 yrs 16d per day 25 upwards 20d per day	3s in £ every occupier assessed
CRANLEY	14 weeks to 13 May 1833 then discontinued	Boys 10–14 yrs 6d per day 14 –16 yrs 8d per day 16–18 yrs 10d per day 18–20 yrs 1s 4d per day 20 upwards 1s 8d per day	4s in £ inhabitants and occupiers of land ; every farmer employing sons as labourers allowed to work out labour rate if assessed £10 one ; £30 upwards two but no more two sons; if the assessment upon houses be greater than the assessment upon land in the occupation of the tenant of such houses assessment be reduced 1/3

PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
ELSTEAD	22 November 1832 6 weeks repeated once	Boys under 14 yrs 6d per day 14 –16 yrs 8d per day 16 –18 yrs 1s per day 18–20 yrs 1s 4d per day 20 yrs upwards 1s 8d per day	1s 6d in £ assessment; allotment of able bodied labourers be made to each person assessed at the rate of 1 man to every £15 of assessment and in proportion to all who are rated at a less amount; every person employ one man to every £15 assessment and in proportion to all who are rated at a less amount before he is entitled to work out the amount of his labour rate ratepayers assessments under £20 exempt payment labour rate; 1 son allowed included labour rate if working on the farm most cases of 2 and 3 overruled
FARNHAM	3 <sup>rd</sup> December 1832 3 months	14 –21 yrs 5s week 21 yrs upwards 10s per week	every 30 acres of arable, pasture and wood and for every 6 acres of hop ground one man(boys under 14 yrs no counted and those 14 yrs – 21 yrs two will count one labourer) must be found constant employment by farmers before permitted to work out labour rate set 1s in £ for 3 months;
FARNHAM	4 <sup>th</sup> March 1833 3 months	12–15 yrs 2s 6d per week 15–18 yrs 5s per week 18–21 yrs 7s 6d per week 21–65 yrs 10s per week 65–75 yrs 7s 6d per week 75 yrs above 5s per week	every 30 acres of arable, pasture and wood and for every 6 acres of hop ground one man(boys under 14 yrs no counted and those 14 yrs – 21 yrs two will count one labourer) must be found constant employment by farmers before permitted to work out labour rate set rate 6d in £ for 3 months; ratepayers who are not occupiers of land may participate in the benefit of the rate by making terms with the occupiers of land to work out their rate for them

PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
FARNHAM	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 1833–October (not in operation in August and September 1833)	12–15 yrs 2s 6d per week 15–18 yrs 5s per week 18–21 yrs 7s 6d per week 21–65 yrs 10s per week 65–75 yrs 7s 6d per week 75 yrs above 5s per week	every 30 acres of arable, pasture and wood and for every 6 acres of hop ground one man(boys under 14 yrs no counted and those 14 yrs–21 yrs two will count one labourer) must be found constant employment by farmers before permitted to work out labour rate set rate 6d in £ for 3 months; ratepayers who are not occupiers of land may participate in the benefit of the rate by making terms with the occupiers of land to work out their rate for them
FARNHAM	11 <sup>th</sup> November 1833– March 1834	No full details	rate 1s 6d in the £ no further details
FRENSHAM	28 October 1832 for 2 months 4 April 1833 for 8 weeks	under 16 yrs 6d per day 16–18 yrs 9d per day 18– 20 yrs 14d per day Able bodied 20d per day	rate 1s in £ and in operation after 1 labourer been constantly employed to every £20 of poor rate assessment
FRENSHAM	4 April 1833 for 8 weeks	boys under 14 yrs 6d per day; 14 –16 yrs 9d per day; 16–18 yrs 1s; 18–20 yrs 16d per day; labourers maximum 10s per week able bodied men	ratepayers employ labourers to the amount of a 5s poor rate will be allowed 1s in £ out of his poor rate ; no farmer's sons unless he has more than one son of 20 yrs or more who constantly works as labourer and only one allowed; no person allowed any portion of rates unless employed one labourer for every £20 assessment and in proportion

PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
WEST HORSLEY	1 November 1832 for 6 weeks second 8 weeks third 12 weeks (not renewed July 1833 because unnecessary)	boys under 14 yrs 6d per day 14 –18 yrs 1s 4d per day 18–22 yrs 1s 6d per day able bodied 1s 8d per day	General rate 6s in £ and 1s 6d of it to meet general expenses of parish and 4s 6d ratepayers able to discharge themselves of it for labour rate
SEND AND RIPLEY	4 May–30 June 1833	under 14 yrs 6d per day 14 –16 yrs 8d per day 18–20 yrs 1s 4d per day able bodied 2s per day	4s in £ for relief of the poor and every rate payer return a list of expenditure of labour ; sons employed by parents as labourers labour rate allowed; rate not collected from persons assessed rates less than £5; to equalise assessment 4s in £ allowances made: 50% assessment on meadow and pasture; 33% on River Wey and Newark mill; 25% on assessments £10 - £15; 50% ( 2s in £) assessments £5 - £10; no labour rates on persons assessed under £5
WITLEY	27 October 1832–29 June 1833	no details	1s in the £
WORPLESDON	19 November 1832	boys 10–14 years 5d per day 14 –17 yrs 10d per day 17–20 yrs 1s 3d per day 20 yrs upwards 1s 8d per day	rate 1s 6d in £. Ratepayers allowed the amount of his rate by employing 1 man to every £25 of assessment; farmer allowed labour rate 2 sons if working on farm

PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
WOKING	November 1832–25 <sup>th</sup> April 1833 29 April– 29 October 1833	under 14 yrs 6d per day 14 –16 yrs 8d per day 18 –20 yrs 1s per day Able bodied 1s 10d per day	5/6 of rate made relief of the poor; ratepayer allowed to expend 5/6 of rate on labour;ratepayers that not occupy more 5 acres of land ¼ of 5/6 of such rates expounded on wages to labourers and the whole 5/6 be remitted to him; ratepayers that not occupy more 10 acres of land ½ of 5/6 of such rates expounded on wages to labourers and the whole 5/6 be remitted to him; ratepayers that not occupy more 15 acres of land ¾ of 5/6 of such rates expounded on wages to labourers and the whole 5/6 be remitted to him; ratepayers rated at £5 and under ½ of 5/6 of such rates expounded on wages to labourers and the whole 5/6 be remitted to him;

Table 9.5 OPERATION OF LABOUR RATE 1831–1834 INFORMATION FROM PARISH VESTRY MINUTES

PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
ABINGER P1/6/3	31 October–21 December 1831	6s per week single man 10s per week married man labourers under 16 yrs two shall be considered equal to one man	Every occupier to employ one labourer in proportion to £20 assessment. Labour rate 1s in £
ABINGER P1/6/3	26 December 1831–29 January 1832	same	
ABINGER P1/6/3	(May 1832 parish borrowed £250 to pay off debts employing poor)		
ABINGER P1/6/3	18 December 1832–4 February 1833	Boys under 16 yrs 8d per day 16–20 yrs 1s per day 20–25 yrs 16d per day 25 yrs upwards 20d per day	Labour rate 3s in £ every occupier to employ one labourer in proportion to £20 assessment
ABINGER P1/6/3	9 February 1833–23 March 1833	same	same
BETCHWORTH P22/5/73	19 November 1832– 25 March 1832	no details	1s 6d in £ assessment inhabitants and occupiers of land
BETCHWORTH P22/5/73	4 October 1832–15 November 1832	13 –15 yrs 6d per day 15–18 yrs 8d per day 18–20 yrs 12d per day 20 yrs upward 18d per day	1s in £ assessment

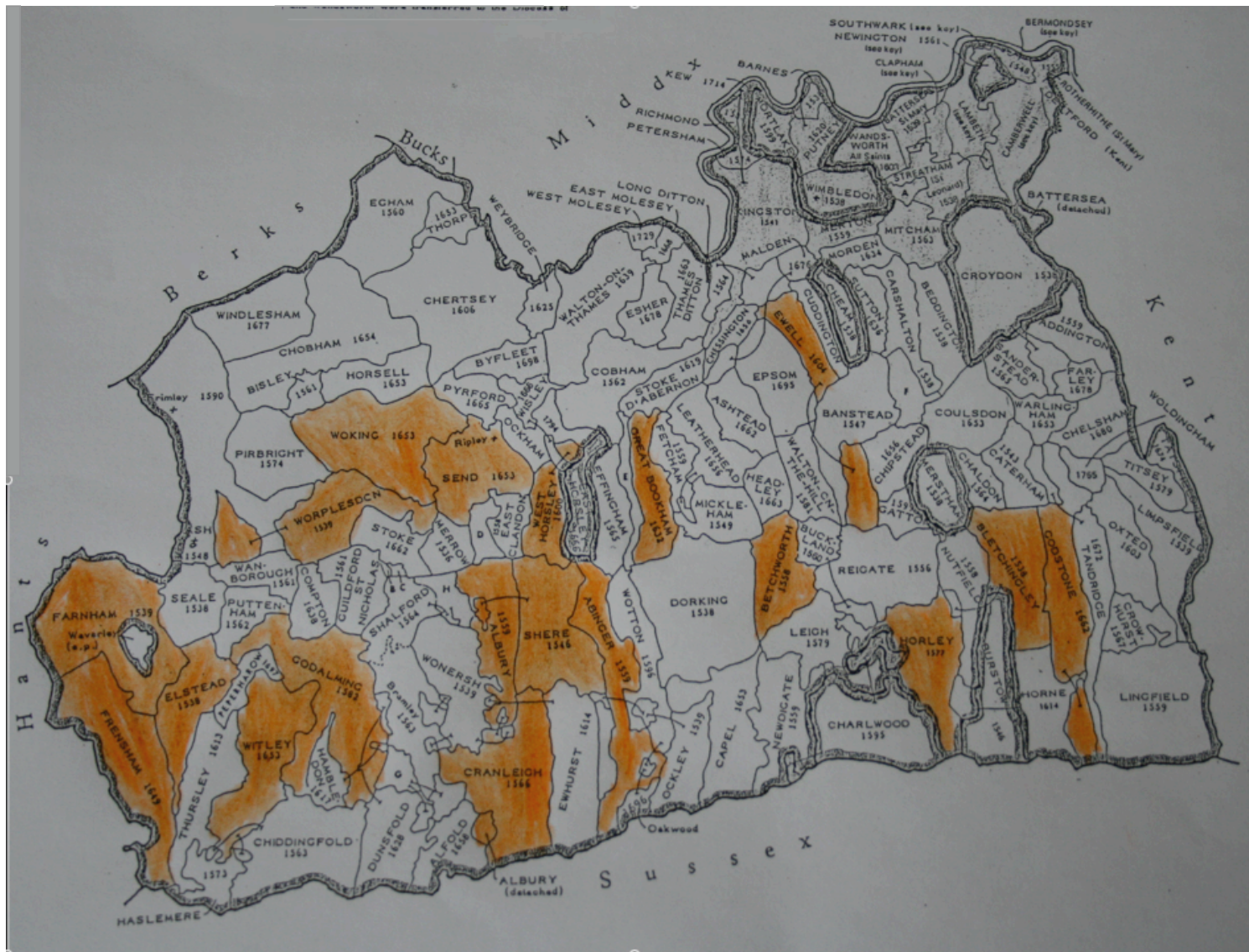
PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
EWELL I 3831/1/2	29 February 1832 no details	no details	Labour rate 6d in £ assessment inhabitants and occupiers of land no further details
GODSTONE P25/4/11	30 January 1831 and 19 October 1832 no further details	6s per week single man not exceed 10s married man	Rate 1s in £ every occupier of land or other property employ one labourer in proportion to one man for £40 assessment
GODSTONE P25/4/11	7 January 1833	no details	Labour Rate 2s in £ no further details
GODSTONE P25/4/11	21 October 1833	no details	Labour Rate 2s in £ no further details
GODALMING 2253/11/1	winter 1831 November no exact dates	boys 14 –16 yrs 3s per week boys 16–18 yrs 4s per week 18–20 yrs 5s per week single men over 20 yrs 6s per week man and wife 7s 6d per week Family with one child 8s 6d per week Family 2 children 10s per week Family 3 children 11s 6d per week	

PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
GODALMING 2253/11/1	21 Nov 1832–15 January 1833	boys under 12 yrs 4d per day boys 12–14 yrs 6d per day boys 14 –16 yrs 8d per day boys 16 –18 yrs 1s per day 18 – 20 yrs 1s 4d per day 20yrs and upwards 1s 8d per day	Labour rate 1s in £ . Sons of ratepayers employed daily labourers included; all occupiers of houses or buildings assessed £2 or under exempt; ratepayers not employing labour liable payment of this rate in full
GODALMING 2253/11/1	16 Oct 1833–14 January proposed by vestry but refused by magistrates as rate allowed relief poor 12 October 25 <sup>th</sup> October “as labour rate cannot now be made which magistrates will sanction” abandoned	boys under 12 yrs 4d per day boys 12–14 yrs 6d per day boys 14 –16 yrs 8d per day boys 16–18 yrs 1s per day 18–20 yrs 1s 4d per day 20yrs and upwards 1s 8d per day	Labour rate 1s 6d in the £
HORLEY P30/5/6	6 Nov 1833–25 <sup>th</sup> March 1834	no details “the rate of wages shall be in proportion to the ages and abilities of the labourers but every occupier shall give each able bodied married labour the same wages per week as he or they shall be in the habit of giving to their other constant labourers”	Labour rate 1s in £



PARISH	IN OPERATION	SCALE OF WAGES SET	RATEABLE ASSESSMENT TO BE USED FOR LABOUR SCHEME
SHERE P10/1/7	25 November 1833–6 January 1834	under 14 yrs 6d per day under 16 yrs 8d per day under 18 yrs 10d per day 18 – 20 yrs 1s 4d per day 21 yrs and above 1s 8d per day	rate assessed 4s in the £ and part of this to be used to employ labourers and the whole of the ratepayers proportion of 4s in the £ permitted if his expenditure on wages equal in amount to his proportion of 4s in £
SHERE 1956/7/14	6 January 1834 –15 February 1834	under 14 yrs 6d per day under 16 yrs 8d per day under 18 yrs 10d per day 18–20 yrs 1s 4d per day 21 yrs and above 1s 8d per day	rate assessed 3s in the £ and part of this to be used to employ labourers and the whole of the ratepayers proportion of 3s in the £ permitted if his expenditure on wages equal in amount to his proportion of 3s in £

**Map 9.6 - Parishes that operated the Labour Rate in Rural Surrey 1831-1834**



**Source:** Operation of Labour Rate in Surrey from Returns Royal Commissioners Report of the Royal Commissioners Poor Law Report Appendix D xxxviii(44), Surrey pp.55D-73D and information SHC Abinger Vestry Minutes P1/6/3, Betchworth Vestry Minutes P22/5/73, Ewell Vestry Minutes 1383/1/2, Godstone Vestry Minutes P25/4/11 and Godalming Vestry Minutes 22 53/11/1

The August 1832 act <sup>73</sup> acknowledged that although there were many laws in force for the relief and employment of the poor, “many able-bodied labourers are frequently entirely destitute of work or unprofitably employed and in many instances receive insufficient allowance for their support from the poor rates.”<sup>74</sup> Some parishes reiterated this sentiment when discussing the adoption of the scheme. In November 1831, when the parish of Godalming discussed a labour rate, the overseers were anxious to point out that there were “upward of one hundred men for whom no productive labour can be found.” They added that the labour provided by the parish “is well known to be useless and unproductive and they (the labourers) consider it degrading and demoralising.”<sup>75</sup> Before introducing the scheme many parish officials were anxious to obtain the support of ratepayers. The Godalming vestry tried to obtain their adherence by convincing them that economically the scheme was sound:

“It is estimated that one fourth at least of the rates collected during the winter season is expended in the shape of wages on the superfluous labourers for which the parish gets nothing in return. The parish at large therefore sinks one fourth part of the amount paid in poor rates and of course each individual loses one fourth of his contribution.”<sup>76</sup>

Now the Godalming vestry was offering ratepayers instead of “sustaining this positive loss of all, be at liberty to expand one fourth of his assessment in employing the superfluous labourers himself.”<sup>77</sup>

The management of such schemes was extremely onerous and time consuming to administer; it encountered problems of enforcement and was subject to considerable abuse. In agricultural parishes where large farmers relied on unskilled labour, they

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<sup>73</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> William IV 1832 c.96 for the better employment of labourers in agricultural parishes.

<sup>74</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> William IV 1832 c.96 for the better employment of labourers in agricultural parishes p.3.

<sup>75</sup> SHC 2253/11/1, ‘Godalming vestry minutes 4 December 1831’.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

benefited both from a cut in their wages bill and a reduction in their poor rates. Some parishes, as at Cranleigh, made concessions to smaller farmers by allowing them to employ their sons as day labourers. However, small tradesmen, who used only family labour, did not benefit. Maclean recognised this point, commenting in his report that the labour rate “created extreme dissatisfaction among the tradesmen, tithe-owners, householders, a class of ratepayers who have no opportunity, means or necessity to employ much labour.”<sup>78</sup> Although there was criticism of the scheme in the short term, it did possess many positive advantages. For example in Farnham in the winter of 1831–32 196 men were being relieved by the parish. In January–February 1833 when the labour rate was operating, only twelve men were chargeable, a saving of £584 in eight weeks for the parish. In 1833, Thomas Drewitt reported that the poor rates in the Guildford area, hitherto increasing, were now in decline because of the introduction of the labour rate.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Smallpiece observed that “we have none unemployed now; it has relieved a great many of our worst parishes very much” and labourers are no longer “lying about upon the roads; they are now employed to some purpose.”<sup>80</sup> Maybe the reason for the widespread support is summed up by Maclean when he observed that since the introduction of the labour rate “no fires, no depredations and no disturbances have occurred.”<sup>81</sup> This must have been a key factor for parish support.

Not all supported the scheme, and it was never renewed after 1834. The poor law commissioners thought the labour rate so pernicious that they issued the early publication of a report designed to secure the abandonment of the practice.<sup>82</sup> The commissioners viewed the scheme as supporting the tenant farmers (who controlled most vestries in rural

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<sup>78</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C. H. Maclean p. 554A.

<sup>79</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Evidence T. Drewitt Question 10210 - 15 pp.477-8.

<sup>80</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture V 1833, Evidence G. Smallpiece Question 12872, 12875, 12876, p. 616.

<sup>81</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey C.H. Maclean p.552A.

<sup>82</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Labour Rate Schemes Poor Appendix D XXXVIII including Surrey pp. 55D–73D.

Surrey). "The country is now aware that the great motive to the maladministration of the poor laws is the desire of the farmers in the country to throw part of the wages of their workmen on those who are not direct employers of labour."<sup>83</sup> They added that the poor now perceive their wages "are not a matter of contract but a matter of right."<sup>84</sup> In his report on Surrey, Majendie declared that it was "decidedly wrong in principle as interfering with the market for labour and imposing the employment of labour on those who do not require it", but at the same time accepted it was useful as a "temporary expedient".<sup>85</sup>

### *Emigration*

After the turmoil of the Swing riots, more contemporaries favoured emigration as a solution to the unrest and a way to alleviate the problem of poverty, by removing surplus labour and the disorderly. The large market town of Dorking had one of the highest poor relief expenditures in rural Surrey.<sup>86</sup> By 1830, the town was experiencing considerable unemployment which was of great concern to the select vestry. The issue of pauper unemployment was discussed at numerous special vestry meetings between 1828 and 1830. In 1830 the Swing disturbances directly affected Dorking, for the town experienced a riot and several farmers in the vicinity became victims of incendiary attacks. As a result, a special vestry meeting held on 10th February 1832 decided "to encourage emigration of persons receiving relief from the parish."<sup>87</sup> The motion, proposed by Charles Barclay Esq., chairman of the select vestry, and seconded by William Crawford Esq., declared that:

"the number of labourers in this parish has for many years so far exceeded the number required for the cultivation of the land and for other purposes,

<sup>83</sup> Report of the Royal Commissioners on Poor Laws 1834 Concerning the Labour Rate XXXII p. 278.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834, Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey Evidence A. Majendie p.166A.

<sup>86</sup> April 1830–March 1831 £3,835 per annum

<sup>87</sup> SHC Dom/9/3, 'Dorking select vestry 10 February 1832'.

that the overseers have been constantly under the necessity of employing a great many upon public works at a very considerable expense beyond the value of their labour.”<sup>88</sup>

Barclay also recognised that “there is no prospect of any improvement in the condition of these supernumerary labourers from any future increase of employment in this parish, the only mode of affording them permanent relief is by giving encouragement to such of them as are willing to emigrate with their families to our colonies in North America”.<sup>89</sup>

### Cost

In 1832, emigrants normally not only paid their fares but also found the clothing and provisions for the long sea journey, as well as the costs of transportation on arrival in the new country. People emigrating would have to forgo earnings for one to three months and so emigration of the poor agricultural labourer without assistance was extremely difficult. As Eric Richards has pointed out, the poor were not well placed to raise the costs of emigration: “instead, the poor usually came last in the sequence of emigration.”<sup>90</sup> Therefore, typical self-financed emigrants tended to be substantial tenant farmers, skilled industrial workers or village craftsmen with some savings.

The scheme adopted by many parishes after 1830 was to encourage poor emigration by financing the journey of individuals or small family groups, though once at their destination the emigrants were on their own. In April 1832, the Esher vestry agreed to pay for the emigration to America of five single men and one family of six.<sup>91</sup> The parish of Thames

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> E. Richards, ‘How did poor people emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the nineteenth century’, *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), 250.

<sup>91</sup> SHC 238/ES/9/3, ‘Esher vestry minutes 12 April 1832’.

Ditton assisted Henry Ratcliffe to leave for America.<sup>92</sup> The parish of Cranleigh helped the Elliott family of nine and the Toft family of eight to emigrate to America. The parish provided them with clothes and agreed to pay the adults' two sovereigns and the children one sovereign each, respectively, on their arrival. The total cost to the parish was £11, and it appears as though the scheme was not repeated.<sup>93</sup> In Shere, a collection raised £17 12s 6d to send the Martin family of four to New York in 1834.<sup>94</sup> The parish of Betchworth considered emigration in 1832, and two years later the vestry agreed that all persons rated at £10 and upwards should contribute 1s in the pound towards an emigration scheme to send single men to America. Unfortunately, there are no further records of this scheme in operation.<sup>95</sup> All these schemes involved very small numbers and proved to be far less of a financial and administrative burden than organising large-scale emigration, although after 1830 there were agents, who wrote to parish overseers offering their services to organise parish emigration "at the lowest possible rates."<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, large-scale emigration only occurred from Dorking in 1832, the parish using the agent E.M. Mitchell of London. The Dorking scheme followed large-scale parish schemes such as those operating in the Kent parishes of Headcorn and Beneden which enabled the emigration of the poor by providing financial assistance.<sup>97</sup> To qualify for assistance in Dorking, the recipient had to be in receipt of poor relief. Others could join the emigration scheme but had to pay their own costs.

#### *Canadian colonisation*

Since 1763, when Canada had become a colony of the United Kingdom, a number of emigrants had settled there, although at this time there was no regular attempt to measure the outflow of population leaving the United Kingdom. In 1826 A.C. Buchanan

<sup>92</sup> SHC 2568/6/1, 'Thames Ditton vestry minutes 13 May 1832'.

<sup>93</sup> SHC 58/1/1, 'Cranleigh vestry minutes 31 September 1834'.

<sup>94</sup> SHC P10/1/7 'Shere emigration 28 April 1834'.

<sup>95</sup> SHC P22/5/73, 'Betchworth vestry minutes 15 February 1834'.

<sup>96</sup> SHC FP1/3/3 File 2, 'Farnham vestry letter from William Canon 6 February 1833'.

<sup>97</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Emigration V 1826–7.

visited England from Canada and painted a grim picture of the effects of unorganised emigration. He insisted on the need for a well-organised and regulated system to avoid “the most fatal consequences [that] will result to the colonies as well as indescribable misery to the poor emigrant.”<sup>98</sup> In 1827, Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of Canada, reiterated this view by stressing the importance of regulating emigration and of finding employment for the emigrants. Between 1791 and 1840 emigration contributed to the rapid growth of the population in Upper Canada (now Ontario). A population estimated at only 14,000 in 1791 reached 374,000 in 1836, with the influx peaking in 1831–32.<sup>99</sup> Sir John Colborne, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada from 1828, was determined to develop the province by establishing new townships, and to do so he wanted to encourage British settlers. In order to entice them to the province, he offered them assigned lots of land on terms of deferred payments and promised new settlers help with food, shelter and medical care. If the emigrants could not find work independently, the government of Upper Canada hired them as road builders.

In 1832 the Colonial Office instructed Colborne to reduce and gradually phase out aid to the able-bodied emigrants. Colborne tried to resist these instructions because he favoured British assisted settlements in the newly opened townships. He saw large numbers of American settlers in Upper Canada as a potential military liability in the event of war between the countries and as a threat to established British customs. He envisaged British emigrants of independent means acting as administrators and poor emigrants supplying the labour to develop the new townships.

<sup>98</sup> NA CO 384/20, fo.216, ‘A. C. Buchanan Letter to Horton 11 September 1827’.

<sup>99</sup> D. McCalla, *Planting the province: the economic history of Upper Canada 1784–1870* (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1993), p.249.



*The British Government and assisted emigration*

As Dunkley points out, there was a tendency to regard the “colonies as a safety valve for the release of domestic tensions.”<sup>100</sup> The first instance of the British Government acting to facilitate emigration occurred in 1816, when the British War office arranged for the settlement in Ottawa of British soldiers who had been serving in Canada. Later, families from Scotland, also sent out at the instigation of the War Office, joined them. Unfortunately, neither group made satisfactory settlers and few stayed in the area designated by the government. In 1817, the select committee of the House of Commons that considered the provision of the poor laws examined the first paper on government assisted emigration. Robert Torrens presented a proposal to the committee, pointing out that providing subsistence for the poor could not keep pace with population growth. He proposed colonisation as a way of alleviating the problem, although he did not consider in any detail the means by which such a programme could be implemented.<sup>101</sup> That was left to W.G. Hayter, who calculated that the cost of sending a family of five to the colonies was no greater a financial burden than that required to keep them in a workhouse for a year.<sup>102</sup> As a result, the British Parliament gave grants in aiding emigration to Canada and elsewhere: £50,000 in 1818; £69,000 in 1823; £30,000 in 1825 and £200,000 in 1827. Between 1815 and 1826 Lord Liverpool’s government conducted six separate experiments in state-aided emigration. Finally, in 1826 the House of Commons appointed a committee to study the whole question of emigration.

The house had never before devoted an entire committee to this single subject, nor was it ever again to discuss it in such broad terms. The committee met for two years and produced three successive reports on the issues raised. Wilmont Horton, under secretary

<sup>100</sup> P. Dunkley, ‘Emigration and the state 1803–1842’, *The Historical Journal*, 23 (1980), 356.

<sup>101</sup> R. Torrens, ‘A paper on the means of reducing the poor rate’ in *The Pamphleteer No 20* (1817) in R.D. Collinson Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960).

<sup>102</sup> NA CO 48/49 W.G. Hayter, ‘Proposals for the Redemption of the Poor Rates by means of Emigration’ 15 July 1819.

to Lord Bathurst in the Colonial Office from 1821 to 1828, directed the investigation. The committee spent considerable time listening to witnesses from the colonies. In May 1826, for example, William Bowman Felton Esq., a legislative councillor for the province of Lower Canada, gave evidence, assuring the committee members that a labouring man would prosper in Canada. As a result, the final report of 1827 recommended that parish emigration on a large scale would relieve the home situation. It was proposed that the British Government should finance emigration by loans, and a board of emigration be set up in Britain and the colonies to administer the scheme. In 1828 Wilmont Horton introduced a bill into the house to enable parishes to mortgage their poor rates for the purpose of assisting voluntary emigration. The bill failed, due to lack of support, and it was not until the passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 that parishes were able to raise funds on the security of the poor rates to assist emigration.<sup>103</sup>

#### *Who was to pay?*

At the time, many in government circles, for different reasons, opposed government-assisted emigration. In a letter to the Earl of Elgin, Earl Grey commented "if the means of emigration were supplied by the public, a very different class of emigrants would make its appearance; the most infirm or the least industrious are those whom their neighbours at home would be the most anxious to put forward to emigrate."<sup>104</sup> Malthus also attacked Wilmot Horton's plans for long-term emigration by claiming that it would create a vacuum, which would be quickly filled by more rural poor who would reproduce even more rapidly. At the same time, he did accept that emigration was suitable as a temporary method of relief from the sudden excesses of population.<sup>105</sup> In 1831 Brougham proposed that surplus labour should be removed from the Swing areas with the aid of assisted emigration to the colonies, and Lord Goderich supported the "removal of 50,000

<sup>103</sup> Nassau Senior's clauses 62 and 63 1834 4 & 5 Wm IV c.76 Poor Law Amendment Act 1834.

<sup>104</sup> Papers Relative to Assisted Emigration, XXXIX, 1847 pp. 53–5.

<sup>105</sup> R. N. Ghosh, 'Malthus on emigration and colonization: letters to Wilmot Horton', *Economia* 30, (1963), 45-62.

industrious individuals from the southern counties of England that would cure the evil under which they suffer.”<sup>106</sup>

Charles Barclay of Dorking was aware of the debate taking place in the House of Commons on the emigration issue. He had travelled extensively in the United States of America and knew of the Canadian Company’s advertising campaign for the sale of lands in almost every township of Upper Canada.<sup>107</sup> In 1830 the company’s speaker, William Cattermole, lectured in Guildford during a sixteen-month tour that also took him to Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Kent.<sup>108</sup> In 1833 Charles Barclay summed up the advantages of emigration when he commented that “forty or fifty thousand persons have annually emigrated to Upper Canada alone, during the last two years and have found good employment and comfortable habitations.”<sup>109</sup>

At the same time, he disapproved of state-aided emigration, affirming “to this I am at the present time decidedly averse. I cannot but think that the principle upon the present system works as fast as either the parent state or its colonies can bear, and that the check occasioned by the difficulty of obtaining sufficient funds to forward every applicant is a very useful one.”<sup>110</sup> He was concerned that if state-aided emigration was introduced, thousands of people would join the exodus from Britain, and the colonial infrastructure would not be able to cope: “The greatest evil and misery would arise, were so large a number sent at any one time, as to be unable to obtain a proper provision.”<sup>111</sup> He was not a supporter of Horton’s plan that parishes should mortgage their rates for the purpose of funding emigration. He believed this would cause friction between the parish authorities and the paupers, with paupers asserting their right to this assistance and thus

<sup>106</sup> University College London Brougham Papers, ‘3 Hansard, IV: 264–65 23 June 1831 and Lord Goderich to Lord Brougham 28 December 1830’.

<sup>107</sup> *Evans and Ruffy’s Farmer’s Journal*

<sup>108</sup> Archives of Ontario RG1, A–1–6 13780–81, ‘Cattermole to R.B. Sullivan 27 July 1836’.

<sup>109</sup> C. Barclay (ed), *Address to the inhabitants of Dorking and letters from the Dorking Emigrants* (Dorking, Robert Best Ede, 1833), p.7

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

adding another difficulty “to the almost endless difficulties created by our poor laws”.<sup>112</sup> The Reverend Sockett who chaired the Petworth Emigration committee in Sussex also opposed government assistance. He believed that legislation “might operate as a powerful check to that emigration which the proposed enactment is intended to encourage, unless the benefit of the emigrant himself be the first object, not only ostensibly but really, it would be far better to leave the whole matter as it is.”<sup>113</sup>

### *The Petworth emigration scheme*

The Petworth Emigration Committee from 1832 to 1837 assisted 1,800 men, women and children to leave England for Upper Canada on ships chartered by the committee, which sailed from Portsmouth every summer.<sup>114</sup> The Petworth emigrations took place under the patronage of the earl of Egremont who encouraged them by assuming the financial risk of chartering ships and other expenses. He also paid the full passage of emigrants sent to Upper Canada from parishes where he owned all the land and part passage where he owned some of the land. The committee was also prepared to take people from neighbouring counties whose passage was paid by their own parish or by some other scheme, as was the case for the Dorking emigrants.<sup>115</sup> The Petworth committee promoted emigration by extensive advertising. Posters, handbills, newspaper advertisements, pamphlets, local meetings and the compilations of published letters from settled emigrants were all used to encourage further emigration. It was one of the most successful of a number of assisted emigration schemes, being well organised and well conducted by the Petworth committee. Emigrants were transported to Canada in well-regulated ships and the committee organised the transportation for the emigrants to their

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Report of Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act XVII Part I 1837, Evidence T. Sockett 9<sup>th</sup> March p.1–20.

<sup>114</sup> WSRO PHA 137,140, Goodwood MS 1473,1474 and W. Cameron and M. McDougall Maude, *Assisting Emigration to Upper Canada: the Petworth Project 1832–1837* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press,2000)

<sup>115</sup> Emigrants from Hampshire, Somerset, Hereford, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Wiltshire

ultimate destination in Upper Canada. The Dorking scheme was only advertised locally, but, in a similar manner to Petworth, compilations of published emigrant letters were circulated to encourage further emigration.

*The cost of the Dorking emigration scheme*

The cost of the Dorking scheme was financed by subscription, and the provisions of food and clothing for the journey was paid for from the parish rates. Charles Barclay justified this parochial expense by pointing out “if the parties had remained at home, [they would] have been provided by the parish”.<sup>116</sup> In the preceding years, the parish had paid £452 2s 10d in employing the poor for the period ending 25 September 1830; £539 16s 0d for the period ending 24 March 1831, and £337 13s 10½d for the period ending 25 September 1831.<sup>117</sup> Charles Barclay, in his *Address to the Inhabitants of Dorking*, encouraged parishioners to subscribe to the scheme, in the hope that the local community would finance the emigration to prevent the alarming growth of expenditure on the poor rates and to avoid further social unrest.<sup>118</sup> In his address Charles Barclay stressed “we have the power of securing one individual from state of want and wretchedness and of making him an industrious, useful and independent citizen.” He believed “industrious persons with or without small capitals have a fair prospect of maintaining themselves and their families in comfort and independence.” He was anxious to point out that Canada was the ideal place for settlement “the climate is very similar to our own, and the emigrant upon his arrival there will find himself surrounded by his fellow countrymen, engaged in similar objects, willing and able to give him both their advice and assistance.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Barclay, *Address*, p.6.

<sup>117</sup> SHC DOM/9/3, ‘Dorking vestry minute book March 1831’.

<sup>118</sup> Barclay, *Address*. pp.7–8

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

In order to qualify for assistance under the emigration scheme, the would-be emigrants had to have settlement rights in the parish of Dorking and be in receipt of parish relief. The authorities were very strict in enforcing this rule. The case of the Willard family illustrates this. Dorking refused to pay the expenses of the family, although they lived in the parish. There was a dispute over settlement and so the case was referred to the Quarter Sessions. To avoid further litigation expenses, the parishes of Shere and Albury agreed to contribute £30 each towards the emigration costs for the family of eleven, and the parish of Dorking contributed £27 14s 2d. Joseph and Sarah Longhurst and their children from Capel also joined the Dorking party. The parish of Capel paid their expenses from money borrowed from Mr James Broadwood. The sum of £38 2s 11d was repaid to Mr Broadwood in the autumn of 1832 and is recorded in the overseers' accounts.<sup>120</sup> The expenses for the Longhurst family do not appear in the Dorking accounts, for they were paid directly to the Petworth Emigration Society. John Sturt, Alfred Edwards and David Penfold came from Dorking but were not in receipt of poor relief, and paid £25 10s towards their own expenses to join the party. The other sixty-one emigrants were paid for by the Dorking Emigration Society. The parish contributed money to provide the emigrants with food, utensils, clothing and pocket money for the journey, amounting to £4 6s 5d for each adult. Table 9.7 indicates the total of the emigration expenses for the parish:

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<sup>120</sup> SHC P36/3/6, 'Capel overseers accounts 1832'.

Table 9.7 *Dorking emigration costs 1832*

Paid By The Subscriptions	£	s	d
Passage From Portsmouth To Montreal	182	5	0
Steam Tug Quebec To Montreal	9	2	8
Passage And Provisions Montreal To York, Upper Canada	60	15	0
Pocket Money Mr Abel Superintendent	5	0	0
Pocket Money For Emigrants	54	18	4
Commission To Mr E. M. Mitchell	25	4	1
Printing Stationery And Postage	3	8	1
Accountant For Stationery And Postage	2	0	9
Hire Room For Committee Meetings	1	12	0

Paid By The Parish Of Dorking	£	s	d
For Willard Family:			
Passage To Montreal	27	0	0
Provisions	16	0	0
Utensils	2	7	8
Steam Tug Quebec To Montreal	9	0	0
Pocket Money	8	0	0
Conveyance To Portsmouth And Other Expenses	13	5	4
Clothing	10	3	6
Total	87	14	2
Cash Received Shere And Albury	60	0	0
To Pay	27	14	2

Paid By The Parish Of Dorking	£	s	d
Provision 54 Adults	111	12	10
Utensils For 54 adults	16	1	9
Conveyance To Portsmouth	88	5	11
Clothing And Tools	94	14	6
Total	310	15	0

Source: SHC C. Barclay (ed), *Address to the inhabitants of Dorking and Letters from the Dorking Emigrants* (Dorking, Robert Best Ede, 1833).

The Dorking Emigration Society then paid £25 4s 1d, (approximately 5 per cent commission) to Mr Edward Charles Mitchell, a London broker of Salvador House, Bishopgate, to secure the berths and provisions for the voyage. He contracted with the Petworth Committee, who had chartered their own ships, to send the Dorking emigrants to Canada. Mitchell negotiated a group rate on the Petworth Emigration Committee's

ships bound for Quebec at £3 7s 6d per adult passage, and he provided provisions for the emigrants. Mr Christopher Abel of Dorking, who had prior knowledge of Canada, was appointed superintendent of the emigrant party. His role was to sail with the party of twenty-one single men and ten families with children and to provide assistance to the Dorking group. The Dorking party travelled together to Portsmouth. In April 1832 the *Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Herald* reported that “emigrants had arrived in this town from Sussex and parts of Surrey.....during Monday and Tuesday they poured in. In great numbers in wagons, carts.”<sup>121</sup> Of the 603 people who left England in 1832 under the auspices of the Petworth Emigration Scheme, seventy-seven were from Dorking, together with a party of thirteen from Capel. Upper Canada was the destination of the Dorking emigrants, although on arrival in Quebec not all the Dorking emigrants were prepared to make the difficult journey from Lower Canada to the supervised settlements outside York, Toronto.

One other family, comprising Quakers, also left Dorking in 1832. The Society of Friends paid “to forward Moses Chantler and his family to Upper Canada, North America.”<sup>122</sup> They did not sail with the Dorking group but went out on the “Brunswick.” Joseph Sayers lent £100 to the Society of Friends in Dorking to pay the emigration costs and it was agreed “to repay to him with interest at five per cent per annum.”<sup>123</sup>

In 1833 Charles Barclay encouraged the Dorking select vestry to send out another emigrant party from Dorking, organised again by Mr Mitchell. This time the cost was paid totally out of the poor rates; it amounted to £308 13s 3d, but few details of this scheme survive. The issue of emigration in Dorking does not appear to have been suggested again until 1843, when a special vestry was called “to consider the expenditure of

<sup>121</sup> *Portsmouth Portsea and Gosport Herald* 14 April 1832.

<sup>122</sup> SHC Box 17 6189 124, ‘Dorking and Horsham men’s meeting 1832’.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*,



assisting any parishioners who may be desirous of emigrating to any of the colonies” but support for this never materialised.<sup>124</sup>

### *Financial savings*

An analysis of the records reveals that in the short term, the Dorking emigration scheme of 1832 did alleviate the strain that had been put on ratepayers to provide for the poor. In 1833 Charles Barclay made clear reference to the problems of the winters of 1831 and 1832, when the parish had to find employment for between 70 and 80 persons, either upon the roads or in the gravel pits. “This year there have been only 40 or 50, showing a difference about equal to the number of the labourers who emigrated to Canada.” He also acknowledged that “by the assistance afforded to those who have emigrated we may also contemplate the improved situations of those who remain.”<sup>125</sup> If we compare the costs paid out in Dorking for employing the poor and providing casual relief before the emigration of 1832 and 1833, and the costs after those dates, there was a significant saving. This is particularly noticeable in both the summer and winter of 1834-35 (see Table 9.8).

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<sup>124</sup> SHC DOM9/3 part 3, ‘Dorking vestry minute book 1830–1843’.

<sup>125</sup> Barclay, *Address*, p. 6.

Table 9.8 *Dorking poor relief payments 1830–1834*

Date	Casual Relief	Employing Poor	Total
March 1830–September 1830	£306	£452	£758
September 1830–March 1831	£316	£540	£856
March 1831–September 1831	£291	£338	£629
September 1831–February 1832	£285	£671	£956
February 1832–September 1832	£326	£384	£710
September 1832–March 1833	£343	£416	£759
March 1833–September 1833	£280	£164	£444
September 1833–March 1834	**	**	**
March 1834–September 1834	£269	£91	£360
September 1834–March 1835	£174	£195	£369
March 1835–October 1835	£225	£128	£353
October 1835–February 1836	£200	£211	£411

(\* \*\*Spoiled Record)

Source: SHC DOM9/3 part 3: Dorking Vestry minute Book 1830–1843.

Even so, in the short term, the emigration costs had to be considered. These amounted to £310 15s from the poor rates and £415 17s 6d raised by subscription (which was not repaid). Members of the select vestry and subscribers accepted these immediate costs on the basis of the long-term saving and hoped more people would emigrate in 1833. As Charles Barclay pointed out in 1833 “were a similar number of persons to emigrate as last year, we should in the ensuing year have hardly one able-bodied labourer requiring employment from the parish. A most happy conclusion.”<sup>126</sup> Not only would emigration relieve the parish of the burden of providing relief, but the ratepayers would also be relieved of paying increasing rates.

<sup>126</sup> Barclay, *Address* p. 8.

*The Dorking party*

People chose to emigrate, and the socio-economic make-up of the party of Dorking emigrants reveals that it was not a random selection of the population as Table 9.9 shows.

Table 9.9 *The Dorking emigrant who sailed to British North America in 1832.*

Single Men	Age	Single Men	Age	Single Men	Age	Single Men	Age
Arnold John	32	Hill Samuel Junior	40	Scott George	26	Edwards Alfred	20
Blunden James. alias Mitchell	22	Lucy John	28	Page Richard	25	Peters Edward	21
Broughton George	19 (brother Richard)	Merritt James	25	Taylor John	21	Welbeloved John	23
Broughton Richard	20	Pickett Joseph	18	Scott John	20	Sturt John	No Age Given
Davis James alias Watson	22	Rose James	28	Sanford William	17	Penfold David	No Age Given
Worsfold William	29	Worsfold John	No Age	Rowland James	23	Mercer William junior	20

Married Men With Families	Age	Married Men With Families	Age	Married Men With Families	Age	Married Men With Families	Age
<i>Inwood</i>		<i>Terry</i>		<i>Slipper</i>		<i>Cosins</i>	
John	30	Thomas	27	Robert	46	Charles	59
John (son)	13	Sarah (wife)	23	Harriet (wife)	44	Ann(wife)	43
<i>Jeater</i>		Thomas	1	George	21	Hester	21
James	27	<i>Tilt</i>		Harriet	14	Cornelius	20
Eliza (wife)	29	William	27	Robert	13	Thomas	18
Israel	3	Jane(wife)	27	Rose	12	Mary	18
Elizabeth	1	John	7	Jane	8	Elizabeth	16
<i>Lucy</i>		William	5	Levy	6	Caroline	15
James	36	Jane	3	John	2	Nathaniel	13
Jane(wife)	28	Cook:		<i>Willard</i>		Francis	11
Emily	11 mths	Henry	-	William	45	Ann	8
		Wife		Charlotte(wife)	42	John	6
			-	Maria	18	Jesse	5
				William	16	<i>Cosins</i>	
				James	14	Charles	19
				John	13	Ann (wife)	20
				Charlotte	11		
				Henry	8		
				George	6		
				Daniel	4		
				Charles	1		

Source: C.Barclay, *Address to the inhabitants of Dorking Address to the inhabitants of Dorking and Letters from the Dorking Emigrants* (Dorking, Robert Best Ede, 1833), p.13.

Most groups of emigrants contained more young adults and fewer children and old people than the home population. The Petworth project recorded that 48.8% of 1,500 identified emigrants were single males and the largest grouping was young males of 14 to 20 years old.<sup>127</sup> The Dorking data, (see Table 9.9) reflects the typical British emigration profile, the predominant group to emigrate being twenty-four single young males. Hester, 21 years old, the daughter of Charles Cosins, was the only young single woman, but of course she did travel with her large family group. The preponderance of single young men to some extent contradicts Dudley Baines' finding that, in the pre-steam era, family migration was more common, in contrast to the later 'individual' and 'chain' emigration which saw single family members leaving England over a period of several years.<sup>128</sup> However, both the Petworth and Dorking schemes also indicate that large family groups were emigrating.

### *Settlement*

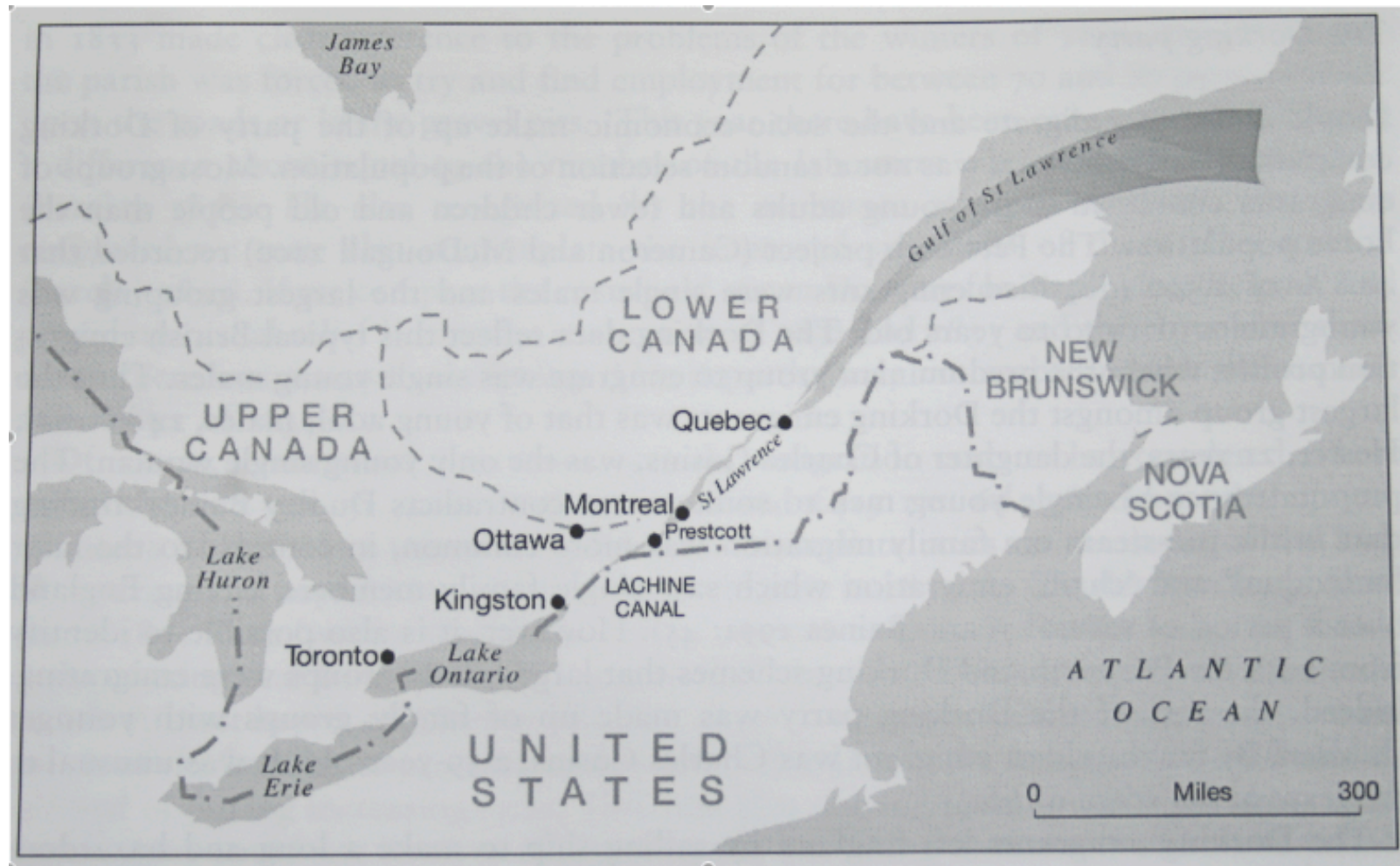
The Dorking emigrants left England by sailing ship to make a long and hazardous journey to Canada which lasted approximately six weeks (see Map 9.10). They aimed to settle in Canada, probably never to return to England. This was a "psychological, familial, financial and organisational challenge" for the poor of southern England who were one of the least mobile sections of the population.<sup>129</sup> It is understandable, then, that on arrival in Canada some of the Dorking families maintained links and there was some intermarriage. For example, John Worsfold married Maria Willard in Canada in 1834. They had both been part of the Dorking emigration party of 1832 (see Table 9.11).

<sup>127</sup> Cameron and McDougall Maude, *Assisting emigration*. pp. 79–108.

<sup>128</sup> D. Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815–1830* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991), p.45.

<sup>129</sup> Richards, 'How did poor', p.253.

**Map 9.10 - Route of the Dorking Emigrants**



The route of the Dorking emigrants up the St Lawrence. Arriving at Quebec by ship, they were then towed upriver by a steamboat. At Montreal some left the party but the rest went through the Lachine canal, then by open boat to Prescott, and finally by steamboat to Kingston and Toronto.

Obstacles that hamper parish emigration research in the years before 1834, have been the paucity of detailed listings of the participants. Ship passenger lists for Canadian destinations have not survived for this period. From the parish records that have survived, I have been able to gain some insight into emigrants' lives before they left Dorking. Robert Slipper and his wife, Harriet, emigrated with seven children and had spent time in the Guildford workhouse from 1823 to 1830.<sup>130</sup> In the Dorking rate book covering the period from 1823 to 1832, James Rose, a single man, rented a cottage in Chipping borough in the parish of Dorking. He was assessed at £2.00 in September 1831 with 8s to pay. Of the ten married families who left Dorking in 1832, only the Cosins family are mentioned in the rating book.<sup>131</sup> In 1831 Charles and his family had become dependent on the parish, and on the 28 November 1831 the vestry received a letter from him "applying for relief and proposing to go with his family (15 in all and belonging to this parish) to America."<sup>132</sup> He may have emigrated because the burden of high rents, tithes and taxes for many years had proved too onerous and resulted in the loss of his farm. In 1832 he may have found it to be an overwhelmingly attractive prospect, the hope of becoming one day the unfettered owner of farmland in Canada. This he did achieve before his death in 1846. The *Petworth Project* have traced, where possible, the journeys made by the emigrants (which include the Dorking emigrants) to their first and subsequent settlements in Canada (see Table 9.11).<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> SHC DOM/1/6, DOM/1/3, GUM/2/1, Dorking vestry minutes 1823–1832.

<sup>131</sup> SHC Acc1358/4/1, 'Dorking rate book 1829–1836'.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Cameron and McDougall, *Assisting emigration*, and W. Cameron, S. Haines and M. McDougall (eds), *English immigrant voices* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

Table 9.11 *Place of settlement of the Dorking emigrants in British North America*

Single Men		Single Men		Single Men		Single Men	
Arnold John	No Details	Hill Samuel Junior	No Details	Scott George (Brother John)	No Details	Edwards Alfred	No Details
Blunden James alias Mitchell	No Details	Lucy John (brother James)	No Details	Scott John	No Details	Peters Edward	No Details
Broughton George	No Details	Merritt James	No Details	Taylor John	No Details	Welbeloved John	No Details
Broughton Richard	No Details			Page Richard	No Details	Sturt John	May Have Returned To England
Davis James alias Watson	No Details	Rose James	To Trafalgar Lower Canada	Sanford William	No Details	Penfold David	No Details
Worsfold William	No Details	Rowland James	No Details	Mercer William jun.	No Details		
Worsfold John	No Age Married Maria Willard						

Married Men With Families: No Details Settlement In Canada
Lucy James, Jane Wife 1 child
Cook Henry, Wife (No details)
Details: Families In Canada
Cosins Charles 1771 –1846, Anne Wife 1786 – 1853 11 Children Settled Upper Canada
Cosins Charles Jr, Ann Wife 4 Children Settled Upper Canada
Inwood John (Wife Sarah Died 1830), John Son To Canada
Jeater James, Eliza Wife 2 Children Settled Upper Canada
Pickett Joseph Married Susannah Husband In 1841 In Canada, 11 Children Settled Upper Canada
Slipper Robert, Harriet 7 Children Family In Workhouse In Guildford 1830 Settled Upper Canada
Terry Thomas, Wife Sarah 1 Child To Upper Canada
Tilt William 1805 –1883, Jane (Cosins) Wife Died In Childbirth In Canada October 1832, Caroline (Cosins) Married 1834, 4 Children Settled Waterloo Township Upper Canada
Willard William Died 1861 In Upper Canada, Wife Charlotte Longhurst 1790 –1864, 9 Children Maria Married John Worsfold in 1834

Source: SHC Acc 1358/4/1: Dorking Rate Book 1829-1836; The Dorking emigrant group who sailed to British North America in 1832. C. Barclay, *Address to the inhabitants of Dorking and letters from the Dorking emigrants* (Dorking, Robert Best Ede, 1833), and W. Cameron and M. McDougall Maude (*Assisting emigration to Upper Canada The Petworth Project*) (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

*Shovelling out paupers?*

The cynical approach would be to view emigration in the short term as being partially successfully in “shovelling out paupers” as emigration was not considered in Dorking as a long-term solution to the problem of rural unemployment.<sup>134</sup> This may well have been because of the cost factor. As the Reverend Sockett commented to Charles Barclay, “I am too well aware of the extreme difficulty that exists in some parishes in raising the money for sending out emigrants.”<sup>135</sup> But there are additional factors that must be considered when examining the motives for instigating emigration. As I have shown, to set up and administer such a scheme took considerable time and energy on the part of Charles Barclay and the select vestry. The Swing riots and the unrest in Dorking may well have acted as a spur to encourage parishioners to contribute to the emigration scheme. However this scheme, like many others that operated at the time, was not just part of a policy for the expulsion of surplus labour. There was a genuine desire to improve the lives of the poor, both those who decided to emigrate and those who remained in the parish. This is reflected in the emigrant letters of those who wrote home and were determined to better their condition in Canada (see Chapter Seven).

*Poor law reform 1834*

Increasingly, after the disturbances of 1830, parish vestries found themselves providing the traditional allowances of pensions, clothing, sickness benefits and so on and, increasingly, wages for the unemployed poor labourers working on the roads and implemented labour schemes. Table 9.12, for instance, shows that in 1832 the percentage of labourers aided by their parishes in the south was far greater than in the

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<sup>134</sup> Hansard C.Buller, 1843: col.522.

<sup>135</sup> WSRO GWD 1464, Letters from the Reverend Sockett to Charles Barclay.



industrial Midlands and the North-west because of the lack of employment opportunities, and for many parishes in the period after 1830 these responsibilities were overwhelming local government.<sup>136</sup>

Table 9.12 *Abstract of poor returns for five counties for 1831–32*

Region	Per-capita Expenditure On Poor	% Of Poor Rate Expended In Employing Poor On Roads	Total % Of Poor Rate Spent On All Parish Work Schemes	Total % Of Poor Rate Spent On Employing Poor	% Of Population Occupied On Parish Work Schemes
Surrey	0.57	5.83	1.35	7.18	1.91
Oxfordshire	0.88	8.0	3.92	11.9	2.1
Buckinghamshire	0.97	6.5	4.28	10.8	2.2
Nottinghamshire	0.33	3.8	0.22	4.1	0.25
Lancashire	0.22	1.0	0.68	1.7	0.08

*Abstract of poor returns nationally for 1831–32*

England	0.50	3.6	1.31	5.2	0.52
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Source: Abstract Poor Rates Returns year to 25 March 1832 and 1833 xxxii (32) pp. 16–7.

The government was now “groping for some response to the Captain Swing riots that had gripped the agrarian south”, which Mandler sees as a “quest for administrative solutions”.<sup>137</sup> By the end of 1830 the government thought that the administration of the present relief system was generating distress by promoting able-bodied pauperism,

<sup>136</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, pp.171–3.

<sup>137</sup> P. Dunkley, ‘Whig and Paupers: The reform of the English poor laws 1830 – 1834, *The Journal of British Studies* 20 (1981) 127 and P. Mandler, ‘The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus’ *Past and Present*, 117 (1987) 149.

depressing wages and encouraging population growth.<sup>138</sup> It was now time for central government to intervene to reduce relief expenditures. The view that the poor law had destroyed the work ethic within the labouring classes had gained more general acceptance. Senior criticised the use of allowances in parishes as causing “idleness and improvidence occasioned by making up wages out of rates.”<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, he agreed with Lord Holland that the present poor law system was responsible for much of the distress in the countryside.<sup>140</sup> Lord Holland also informed Grey in 1830 that the southern and midland counties “cannot remain as they are and nothing can cure the evil but a speedy and effectual revision of the poor laws.”<sup>141</sup>

From its inception in 1830 the Whig government was also “receiving advice that indicated a direct link between the administration of relief and social disruption in the South.”<sup>142</sup> Attempts had been made by Parliament between 1790 and 1830 to reform the poor laws but most “had foundered on the rocks of indecision and division.”<sup>143</sup> Now there were those in government who believed that the present relief system was inadequate to safeguard society, and it was accepted that “idleness, disaffection and dependent poverty were corroding the foundations of social stability.”<sup>144</sup> The poor law was increasingly seen as a threat rather than a prop to social order. Certainly, the riots speeded reform, as “violence was instrumental in converting many agnostics to the cause of poor law reform.”<sup>145</sup> Lord Lansdowne directly attributed the unrest of 1830 to the precarious economic conditions of the agricultural labourer.<sup>146</sup> Many landowners viewed the riots as

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<sup>138</sup> University College London Brougham papers, Lord Holland to Lord Grey 26 November 1830 and University of Durham Lord Grey Papers Box34/File 2, Lansdowne to Lord Grey 2 January 1831 also Box 38/File 10, Lord Goderich to Lord Brougham 28 December 1830

<sup>139</sup> Royal Archives Windsor Melbourne Papers Box 35/91, ‘Memo by N.W. Senior 31 January 1831’

<sup>140</sup> N.W. Senior, (1831) *Three Lectures on the rate of wages: delivered before the University of Oxford in Easter term 1830: with a preface on the causes and remedies of the Present disturbances* (London, J. Murray, 1831) and University College London Brougham papers, Lord Holland to Lord Brougham 31 December 1830.

<sup>141</sup> University of Durham Grey Papers Box 34/File 2, Lord Holland to Lord Grey 26 November 1830.

<sup>142</sup> Dunkley, ‘Whig and paupers’ 127.

<sup>143</sup> L. Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers: the English poor laws and the people 1700–1948* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.113.

<sup>144</sup> Eastwood, (1994) *Governing rural*, p.163.

<sup>145</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.162, and Dauntton, *Progress and poverty*, pp.492–3 also Hobsbawn and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.297.

<sup>146</sup> NA Box 8/86 Melbourne papers, ‘Lord Lansdowne to Lord Melbourne 3 November 1830’.

a signal that the parish administration of poor relief was badly mismanaged and they were no longer guaranteed social stability.<sup>147</sup> In 1833 Lord Lansdowne informed Lord Brougham that the incidents of rural riot bore “an exact proportion to the degree of maladministration of the poor law.”<sup>148</sup> All these concerns resulted, in 1831 in the appointment of a House of Lords committee to investigate the poor laws, that gave full weight to the view that poor law abuse had resulted in the outbreak of riots in 1830.<sup>149</sup> A year later the Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the operation of the poor law system and to overhaul the system.<sup>150</sup> Senior, who was the central figure on the Royal Commission of inquiry into the administration of the poor laws wrote, to Lord Melbourne in 1831 and urged prompt and thorough reform of the poor law system.<sup>151</sup>

The commissioners undertook their investigation in conditions of some urgency, and with the aim to quickly resolve the problems of the present poor law system. Detailed questionnaires were sent to approximately 10 per cent of all the 15, 000 parishes. The investigation was exhaustive, and in March 1834 a 360-page report was published, followed by sixteen volumes of evidence. The Royal Commission’s views were clearly influenced by the criticism of the poor law.<sup>152</sup> Historians have shown that the commission’s investigation into the administration of the poor law “was far from being impartially or judicially directed ...the then existing practice of poor relief.. stood condemned in their mind in advance.”<sup>153</sup> Senior and the commissioners argued that when granting relief, wages paid to labourers was not a matter of right, and attributed the “rural upheavals to the labourers’ attempts “to secure what they considered to be their

<sup>147</sup> G. Bowyer, *An economic history of the English poor law 1750–1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.198, also Knott, *Popular opposition* p. 51.

<sup>148</sup> University College London Brougham papers, ‘Lord Lansdowne to Lord Brougham 17 December 1833’.

<sup>149</sup> Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Poor Laws VIII 1830–31.

<sup>150</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, XXVII–XXXVIII.

<sup>151</sup> Royal Archives Windsor Melbourne Papers Box 35/91, ‘Memo N.W. Senior 31 January 1831’.

<sup>152</sup> Dunkley, ‘Whigs and Paupers’, 127.

<sup>153</sup> Webb and Webb, *English poor Part 11*, pp.84–9, R.H. Tawney. (1926) *The Acquisitive Society* (London, G.Bell,1921), p.269.

legitimate share of the social dividend".<sup>154</sup> The commissioners also agreed with Malthus that the granting of allowances to families also encouraged the poor to have large families. The bulk of able-bodied pauperism had arisen not because of unavoidable distress but through the operation of the poor law that encouraged indolence and improvidence. As a result, the commission accepted that relief in aid of wages should be withdrawn to make labourers more hard working. This, in theory, would result in giving farmers a higher return on capital, which would in turn enable them to pay higher wages. According to Bentham, the continuation of relief to idle and profligate persons would reduce the independent labourer's incentive to work, and so he formulated the concept of "less eligibility", whereby relief was only to be granted by entry into a workhouse. The abolition of outdoor relief, then, would enable the restoration of the free play of economic forces. The commissioners accepted Bentham's arguments, believing that his proposal would enable labourers to find work in their localities.<sup>155</sup> In April 1834, a bill for the amendment of the Poor Law was introduced in the House of Commons, and the Poor Law Amendment Act became law on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1834. The act rejected the notion that society "was reciprocal and organic with social order based upon custom, mutuality, patronage and deference" and, in its place, society was based on an "interdependent market economy resting on self-interest, competition and contract."<sup>156</sup>

Historians have also linked the riots to reform of the poor law.<sup>157</sup> Knott identifies the three successive bad harvests for the years 1828 to 1830; the rising cost of poor relief and the Swing riots of 1830 that made the reform of the old poor law inevitable.<sup>158</sup> Eastwood believes that the Swing riots made magistrates more reluctant to recommend specific

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<sup>154</sup> Dunkley, *The crisis*, p.99.

<sup>155</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners Labour Rate Schemes Poor Appendix D XXXVIII Surrey pp. 55D-73D and Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws 1834, Extracts from information received by Poor Law Commissioners for Surrey Rural Queries for Surrey Appendix B Part I XXX also Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1834 Appendix A part 1 XXVIII Assistant Commissioners' Report for Surrey Evidence C.H. Maclean and A.Majendie .

<sup>156</sup> Dauntton, *Progress and Poverty*, p.493.

<sup>157</sup> Dunkley, *The crisis*, p.166, and A. Brundage, *The making of the new poor law the politics of inquiry enactment and implementation 1832-1839* (London, Hutchinson, 1978).

<sup>158</sup> Knott , *Popular opposition*, p.51.

measures to vestries and “it hastened the time when central government or its agencies would assume responsibility for prescribing and monitoring policies” with the introduction of the 1834 New Poor Law.<sup>159</sup> Boyer and Daunton also view the riots as “the catalyst for poor law reform”<sup>160</sup> and Rose and Hollen Lees identified the pressure on the government for some final solution to the poor law problem after the riots of 1830.<sup>161</sup> Daunton has also argued that the ability of magistrates and parish officials to grant relief was seen by many in central government as the problem, rather than the cure, of social tensions “providing an incentive for riot and disorder to win concessions”.<sup>162</sup> Digby concurs, and believes the riots dealt, mortal blow to the old Poor Law and accelerated reform.<sup>163</sup> However, historians like Hobsbawm and Rudé are not as convinced of the strong link between the riots and reform of the poor laws, and view the riots as only one contributory factor, or as “accelerating rather than initiating new trends”.<sup>164</sup>

### *Conclusion*

It is apparent that after the riots the parish officials and central government were anxious to contain the social tensions. The fear of further unrest meant a concerted effort was made in the short term to combat the problems associated with surplus labour. The introduction of the labour rate, the desire to provide more constructive outdoor employment such as spade husbandry, and sponsored emigration were immediate solutions. The riots may have been symptomatic of the widespread prevalence of low wages, unemployment and underemployment in southern England, deriving from adverse economic conditions. At the time, it was accepted by contemporaries that able-bodied pauperism was caused by the poor relief system itself. The Swing Riots “concentrated

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<sup>159</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.163.

<sup>160</sup> Daunton, *Progress*, p.492 and Bowyer, *An economic history*, p.196.

<sup>161</sup> M. Rose, *The English poor law 1780 – 1930* (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1971), p.75, and Hollen Lees, *The solidarities*, p.114

<sup>162</sup> Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p.492.

<sup>163</sup> A. Digby, (1982) *The poor law in nineteenth century England* (London, The Chameleon Press, 1982), p.11

<sup>164</sup> D. Eastwood, ‘Rethinking the debates on the poor law in early nineteenth-century England’, *Utilitas*, 6 (1994) 109.

the minds of advanced country gentlemen", provoking an earnest quest for administrative reform.<sup>165</sup> As a result, to avoid further unrest and restore discipline in the parishes, there was support for the introduction of the New Poor Law of 1834.

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<sup>165</sup> Mandler, 'The making', p.149.

## Conclusion

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A study of the poor law records for Surrey for the period 1815–1834 has enabled me to gain important insights into the dimensions of rural poverty, and the complex strategies used by parish officials to address problems of poverty. There is ample evidence to indicate that the south of England experienced a developing poverty problem in the period from 1780 to 1834.<sup>1</sup> Broad has identified that only after 1780 “when population rose sharply and rural employment shrank, did the flexibility of combined charitable and rate-based relief founder.”<sup>2</sup> In rural Surrey, as in other southern counties, seasonal unemployment, together with an expanding, casual day-labour force, resulted in endemic underemployment at low wages.

The significance of the poor relief system in supporting the agricultural population is not always easy to determine. Recent work on the economy of makeshifts has portrayed poor relief as one element in the wider strategies deployed by individuals and families to survive.<sup>3</sup> What is evident is that continuing population growth, in conjunction with high prices, the decline of some domestic industries, the abandonment of living-in and yearly hiring practices in favour of day-labour, were significant factors in increasing the hardship of the poor. In addition, the loss of “makeshift activities,” including grazing rights, cow, pig

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<sup>1</sup> S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), chapter 6, and J.P. Huzel, ‘The labourer and the poor law 1750–1850’, in G.E. Mingay (ed), *The agrarian history of England and Wales* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 760–92.

<sup>2</sup> J. Broad, ‘Parish economies of welfare 1650–1834’, *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999) 985.

<sup>3</sup> S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The poor in England an economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003), and T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe, ‘Introduction’ in *Chronicling poverty the voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), pp.1–18.

and geese keeping, as well as fuel collection, had a detrimental effect on the independence of the poor.<sup>4</sup> By the 1830s, the weakening of the economy of makeshifts led to more substantial life-cycle and point-in-time poverty than had previously been experienced. These changes inevitably led to a substantial increase in the proportion of labouring families dependent on poor relief. Increasingly, out-relief became a vital element to the maintenance of the poor's household economy.<sup>5</sup> My research on Surrey supports Broad's and Steven King's argument that assistance from the parish at the beginning of the nineteenth century was increasingly important for the sheer survival of the poor.<sup>6</sup>

The poor laws "were shaped by local communities" and enacted locally, "where face to-face negotiations determined their impact".<sup>7</sup> Since the poor laws allowed considerable interpretational leeway, it was common for poor law practice to vary between parishes in the same locality, as was the case in Surrey. Of course, depending both on the demand for relief and the available local resources, eligibility was policed by the parishes. Broad refers to this as "the local autonomy of need"<sup>8</sup>, where each parish dealt with the problems of providing for relief on a local basis. Hindle has commented on the "highly localised nature of the social welfare provision"<sup>9</sup> and King has also shown it was possible for "two contiguous parishes to be recognizing as deserving two different groups of poor people."<sup>10</sup> In addition, the methods adopted by the various parishes to address the problems of providing relief in Surrey varied. For example, in 1832 Dorking established an emigration

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<sup>4</sup> P. King, 'Gleaners, farmers and the failure of legal sanctions in England 1750–1850', *Past and Present*, 125 (1989), pp.116–150 and, E.L. Jones 'The agricultural labour market in England 1793–1872', *Economic History Review*, 17 (1964) 324–6, and S. Williams, 'Earnings poor relief and the economy of makeshifts in Bedfordshire in the early years of the new poor law' *Rural History*, 16 (2005) 22–53, and M. Hanly, 'The economy of makeshifts and the role of the poor law: a game of chance?' in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The poor in England an economy of makeshifts 1700–1850*, pp. 76–99.

<sup>5</sup> Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, 'Introduction', p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Broad, 'Parish economies', 1002–05, and King, *Poverty*, p.229.

<sup>7</sup> L. Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers the English poor laws and the people 1700–1948* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.7.

<sup>8</sup> Broad, 'Parish economies', 1002.

<sup>9</sup> S. Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c. 1550–1750* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004), p.285

<sup>10</sup> S. King, 'Introduction, Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Britain' in S. King, T. Nutt and A. Tomkins (eds), *Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Volume 1 Voices of the poor: Poor law depositions and letters* (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2006), xxxix.



scheme to relieve the parish of paupers, and nineteen parishes introduced labour schemes after the Swing riots of 1830–32. Of course, the parish was the key determinant for relief policy but historians have also identified regional tendencies.<sup>11</sup> Hindle has considered variations in both levels of need and of relief *within* regions and views them as possibly “more significant than those *between*”<sup>12</sup> regions. In Surrey there were variations in the amounts of poor relief disbursed in contiguous parishes, but at the same time it is possible to identify levels of need within a region, which resulted in “mosaics of local variations”<sup>13</sup>, as discussed and mapped in Chapter Three.

The Surrey poor law records clearly show how parish officials tried to provide adequate outdoor and indoor provision for the poor and needy of the parish. Overseers exercised their authority and assessed the level of need, and in turn raised or lowered rates paid by householders. From this research and other local studies, it is evident that administrators of the old poor law tried to cope in a humane manner with the problems of indigence, unemployment, illness, old age and death. The system did offer some measure of protection against utter destitution, but this became ever more difficult to accomplish as parish vestries faced increasing relief bills and “a sharp rise in the number of poor relief recipients.”<sup>14</sup> Innes has observed that by the early nineteenth century, panic about the inadequacy of the relief system “made eighteenth-century anxieties look low key and restrained”.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.283, and Hindle, *On the parish*, p. 283 and M. A. Lyle. ‘Regionality in the late old poor law: the treatment of chargeable bastards from Rural Queries’, *Agricultural History Review* 53 (2005) 141–157.

<sup>12</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p.283.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.283.

<sup>14</sup> S. Williams, ‘Poor relief, labourers’ households and living standards in rural England c.1770–1834: a Bedfordshire case study’, *Economic History Review*, 58 (2005) 485.

<sup>15</sup> J. Innes, ‘The state and the poor eighteenth-century England in European perspective’ in J. Brewer and E. Hellmuth (eds), *Rethinking Leviathan the eighteenth-century state in Britain and Germany* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p.250.

A necessary response to the growing problem was the “partial professionalisation”<sup>16</sup>, of the parish administration, and this certainly happened in Surrey. Many parishes appointed paid officials, set up select vestries and insisted that parish officials kept detailed records. These measures introduced greater efficiency into parish administration, but it could not solve the problem of increasing pressure on farmers’ incomes, as the fall in prices after 1815, made them reluctant or unable to increase their financial support to the poor of the parish. What this research reveals is the crucial issue of what King calls the “fine line between the demand of the poor for welfare and the ability and willingness of ratepayers to supply the funds to meet this demand.”<sup>17</sup> Overseers had to balance the extent of pauperisation in the parish and “reconcile their legal obligation to relieve the impotent with their social responsibility not to overburden their fellow ratepayers.”<sup>18</sup> As Hindle has observed, the overseers’ judgements about the weight of the tax burden were “invariably sensitive, but they became particularly controversial in years of economic dislocation.”<sup>19</sup> Hollen Lees has identified that the rise in the number of able-bodied claimants at the beginning of the nineteenth century placed greater strain on the relief system.<sup>20</sup> This can be seen in the increasing number of rating disputes in Surrey parishes in the 1820s as discussed in Chapter Six.

Up to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, booming agricultural profits must have helped “to make the rate burden sustainable.”<sup>21</sup> It was only in the post-war years, with economic dislocation and agricultural depression, that confidence in the system faltered.<sup>22</sup> As a result, there was a crisis of paternalism, when the poor law came to be regarded by many as profligate and extravagant, and this was clearly seen in Surrey. Increasingly in the

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<sup>16</sup> D. Eastwood, *Government and community in the English provinces 1700–1870* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), p.46.

<sup>17</sup> King, *Poverty*, p.52.

<sup>18</sup> S. Hindle, *On the parish* p.453.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.377.

<sup>20</sup> L. Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers the English poor laws and the people, 1700–1948* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.100.

<sup>21</sup> Innes, ‘The state and the poor’, p. 262.

<sup>22</sup> P. Mandler, ‘The making of the new poor law redivivus, 117 (1987) 131–57, and ‘The making of the new poor law redivivus: reply, *Past and Present* 127 (1990) 194–201.

1820s, ratepayers not only complained to the vestries about the rising level of poor rates but also for the need for the overseers to maintain or even reduce poor relief expenditure.

Hollen Lees comments that, over time, increasing poverty “triggered a general revulsion against outdoor relief and against the needy who were slowly pushed to the margins of their communities.”<sup>23</sup> Of course, the growing conviction that the poor laws themselves produced pauperism undermined support for the poor relief system.<sup>24</sup> By 1834 it seems the problem of poverty and providing for the increasing numbers requiring relief overwhelmed the limited financial, political and administrative resources of the parishes and broke the contract between pauper and ratepayer. Kidd has identified that what resulted was a crisis of paternalism, in which the poor law was conceived as a major problem and, for it to have a future, required a major overhaul.<sup>25</sup>

There is also the additional problem of understated parish costs, which caused further problems for the parish vestries. In Surrey, as elsewhere, the true scale and intensity of local poverty was not always reflected in the official parish returns made to parliament at the end of the financial year. To balance the accounts, overseers often carried forward certain bills into the following year and did not account for them in their final accounts. These hidden costs increased any deficit in funds so, not only did overseers experience difficulty in collecting sufficient funds from the due rates to cover yearly poor relief costs but in addition they also had to pay off deficits from the previous year. In Surrey, this false accounting only intensified the problems for overseers engaged in balancing the books and providing the relief. The true extent of this problem is difficult to quantify as it is only by close examination of parish accounts that one can identify those bills which were carried over and paid the following year. For example, in the parish of Betchworth, bills for the financial year 1823–24, went unpaid for up to a year, and in Ewell in 1823, the

<sup>23</sup> Hollen Lees, *The solidarities*, p.106.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.93.

<sup>25</sup> J. Kidd, *State society and the poor in nineteenth century England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999), p.4.

overseers had to borrow money to pay off the outstanding debts.<sup>26</sup> Steven King highlights this problem, but little research has been done in this area and more local studies are needed.<sup>27</sup>

Many contemporaries, including William Cobbett, regarded the old poor law as embodying traditional rights and social obligations, including “the right in case we fall into distress to have our want sufficiently relieved out of this produce of the land.”<sup>28</sup> Eastwood agreed with this sentiment and saw the essence of the old poor law as recognising the “poor’s right to relief and the landowner’s right to rent.”<sup>29</sup> Historians have observed that perhaps the poor’s greatest strength was the “depth and emotional power of their own belief in their right to relief.”<sup>30</sup> As Hitchcock, Peter King and Sharpe have shown, the poor adopted many strategies to deal with “the fragility and sparseness of their material world.”<sup>31</sup> These sentiments are clearly identified in Surrey and are discussed in chapter seven. Of course, the Elizabethan poor laws themselves did not confer entitlement (the right to relief) the level of relief was negotiated with the overseers of the parish. As King notes, “at no point did the 1601 legislation definitely establish which people should be seen as deserving and what level and with what regularity their poverty should be relieved.”<sup>32</sup> However, the increasing instability of the labour market meant that at the beginning of the nineteenth century labourers increasingly had to resort to the parish for assistance. Dunkley believes it was the prospect of unemployment or inadequate wages that explains the

<sup>26</sup> SHC P22/5/72, ‘Betchworth vestry minutes 9 April 1823, 29 March 1824 and 2 April 1824, and SHC 3831/1/1, ‘Ewell vestry minutes 27 March 1823’.

<sup>27</sup> King, (2000) *Poverty*, p.71.

<sup>28</sup> W. Reitzel (ed), *The autobiography William Cobbett* (London, Faber and Faber, 1967), pp.224–5.

<sup>29</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing rural England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), p.263.

<sup>30</sup> T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe, ‘Introduction: Chronicling poverty – The voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640–1840, in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds), ‘Introduction: Chronicling poverty–The voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640–1840 Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> P. King, ‘Social inequality, identity and the labouring poor in eighteenth-century England’, in H. French and J. Barry (eds), *Identity and agency in England, 1500 –1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2004), p.61.

<sup>32</sup> King, ‘Introduction’, *Narratives*, p.xxxiii.

labourers' insistence "on their right to aid and on the obligation of those in authority to provide sufficient relief."<sup>33</sup>

Agency generally lay with the poor but the extent of the agency that the poor might exercise in negotiation is often unknown. For example, the granting of parish relief might have been the outcome of a protracted bargaining process with the overseers in the vestry, and these meeting, went unrecorded. On the other hand, the voices of the poor have been increasingly rediscovered, reproduced and re-interpreted by historians<sup>34</sup>, and in Surrey, the letters from out-parishioners and from emigrants back to their families, do give an insight into some of the strategies adopted by the poor to gain relief. As French and Barry have shown, "independent agency tended to be mediated through and restrained by socially accepted pathways."<sup>35</sup> Hindle and Peter King have both considered the role of the poor laws in shaping identity.<sup>36</sup> Of course, the elite provided the value system by which the "deserving poor" were identified and this is seen for Surrey in Chapter Six. King recognises that as the poor struggled to obtain some social autonomy and agency, it was important that they should distinguish themselves as deserving.<sup>37</sup> The poor had to demonstrate they were industrious, thrifty, sober and show deference to their social superiors, if they were to be eligible for relief.<sup>38</sup> This was the case in Surrey and from vestry minutes it is clear to see how parish officials considered a pauper's eligibility for assistance. Chapter Seven considers letters from out-parishioners requesting relief, and, in these, paupers often pleaded hardship or referred to their respectability and

<sup>33</sup> P. Dunkley, 'Paternalism, the magistracy and poor relief in England, 1795–1834', *International Review of Social History*, 24, (1979) 375.

<sup>34</sup> S. King, T. Nutt and A. Tomkins (eds), *Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Britain* Volume 1 Voices of the poor: Poor Law depositions and letters (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2006) and T. Sokoll (ed), *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

<sup>35</sup> H. French and J. Barry, 'Identity and agency in English society, 1500–1800 - Introduction' in H. French and J. Barry (eds), *Identity and agency in English society, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2004), p.23.

<sup>36</sup> S. Hindle, 'Civility, Honesty and the identification of the deserving poor in seventeenth-century England', in H. French and J. Barry (eds), *Identity and agency in English society, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2004), pp.38–59, and P. King, 'Social inequality, identity and the labouring poor in eighteenth-century England' in H. French and J. Barry (eds), *Identity and agency in English society, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2004), pp.60–86.

<sup>37</sup> King, 'Social inequality', pp.82–83.

<sup>38</sup> French and Barry, 'Introduction', p.25.

diligence. As Pamela Sharpe has pointed out, paupers writing to overseers employed strategies to strengthen their case for obtaining a higher level of relief or regular payments.

Of course, there were some paupers who regarded relief as an entitlement rather than a favour, but truculence or ingratitude could result in the withdrawal of relief or a request for relief denied. This was true of Surrey, and Chapter Seven includes examples where overseers warned recipients that they were in danger of losing their relief. Strategies, then, were not always deferential; paupers could be confrontational, and when relief was refused or reduced, some claimants petitioned the local magistrates who in turn, could support or overturn the overseer's decision.<sup>39</sup> These petitions drew the magistracy into the welfare process, and is a further example of one of the strategies the poor might adopt as they struggled "to shift themselves."<sup>40</sup> According to S. King, the number of disgruntled paupers who exercised their right to refer their cases to the magistrates, compared with those who had a theoretical case, is "impossible to discern".<sup>41</sup> From the Surrey records, it appears that only small numbers of paupers appealed, and in many cases the disputes were settled within the parish before the appeal could be heard. Of course, when a pauper pressed his case with local magistrates, it was often in the face of opposition from the vestry. This must partly explain why paupers were often reluctant to appeal to magistrates. Peter King has rightly observed that paupers needed great courage to play off parish officials, their employers and the magistrates, for "deference was the lubricant that greased the machinery of welfare".<sup>42</sup> Appeals could jeopardise a pauper's case within the parish significantly, and, as some Surrey magistrates became more actively involved in poor relief matters as the 1820s progressed, ratepayers became increasingly disenchanted with magisterial discretion in poor law administration.

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<sup>39</sup> P. King, 'The summary courts and social relations in eighteenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 183 (2004) 126–127.

<sup>40</sup> Hindle, *On the parish*, p.445.

<sup>41</sup> King, 'Introduction', *Narratives* xliii.

<sup>42</sup> King, 'Inequality, identity', 80, and Hindle, *On the parish*, p.447.

The unrest and disturbances of 1830–32 were symptomatic of the widespread prevalence of low wages, unemployment and under employment in southern and eastern counties of England. A radicalised workforce demanded higher wages, increased employment opportunities and greater poor law provision. As a result of the FACHRS Swing Project, the scale of the riots has only recently been fully quantified.<sup>43</sup> The attacks reflect the resentment felt by the agricultural labourers, and their desire for vengeance against local landed interests, notably their employers and those who controlled the vestries and made parish poor law decisions. These attacks struck at the very roots of social cohesion, and the letters from the Petworth and Dorking emigrants are very informative on this souring of social relations. As Snell has observed, it is evident that even before 1830 the commonality between labourer and farmer was being eroded with the changing conditions in employment and wage payments for the poor.<sup>44</sup>

The trauma and sense of insecurity produced by the Swing riots affected both central and local government. At a local level, in the period after 1830, parish officials attempted to mitigate the widespread distress among the labouring poor by introducing provisions such as allotments and labour schemes, discussed in Chapter Nine. Immediately after the riots central government supported these schemes, and Brundage also identified a new willingness to accept a comprehensive programme of poor law reform.<sup>45</sup> The predominant themes in the parliamentary investigation of 1832–1833 were the unproductivity of labour and the moral degradation of the poor under the influence of the administration of the chaotic and inefficient old poor laws. Hollen Lees has observed that work, confinement and discipline became “central to the evolving political economy of welfare”<sup>46</sup> long before

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<sup>43</sup> M. Holland (ed), *Swing unmasked the agricultural riots of 1830 to 1832 and their wider implications* (Milton Keynes, FACHRS Publications, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor social change and agrarian England 1660–1900* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 67–103.

<sup>45</sup> A. Brundage, *The making of the new poor law: the politics of inquiry enactment and implementation 1832–1839* (London, Hutchinson, 1978), p.183.

<sup>46</sup> Hollen Lees, *The solidarities*, p.83.

the passing of the 1834 poor law. In fact, she believes that from the beginning of the nineteenth century, pauperism had “slipped into public discourse in sentences reeking of condemnation and moral superiority.”<sup>47</sup>

It is evident in the late 1820s and early 1830s that in Surrey providing for the parish poor had become increasingly difficult, and my research leads me to agree with Eastwood that “the scale of these responsibilities was overwhelming local government.”<sup>48</sup> At the same time the fragile makeshift economy made the poor vulnerable to low wages, insecure employment and to illness and other unforeseen circumstances. One reason why the 1834 Poor Law was accepted was because of the rapid rise in post-war poverty and unemployment, and the corresponding fiscal exhaustion of ratepayers. In addition, the Swing riots of 1830–32 “no doubt induced a sense of concern among the gentry of the southern counties and made them more amenable to the new poor law” as a way of disciplining the rural labourer and re-establishing social order.<sup>49</sup> “Social inequality surely remains the master key which, more than any other factor, can help us to unlock how the poor constructed, and/or had constructed for them, their sense of who they were and who others were.”<sup>50</sup> It is, perhaps, a matter for debate as to how long this construct endured after the upheaval of the early 1830s, when the poor finally ‘voiced’ their desperation.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

<sup>48</sup> Eastwood, *Governing rural*, p.165.

<sup>49</sup> J.P. Huzel, ‘The labourer and the poor law 1750–1850’ in G.E. Mingay (ed), *The agrarian history of England and Wales 1750–1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 792.

<sup>50</sup> King, ‘Inequality, identity’, 82.



# Appendix 1 – Farnham Passing Paupers 1824–1825

1824–1825 Farnham SHC 1505/Box 29	M/F	Children	Where From	Where To	Relief Given
13 April 1824	F	1	Ireland	London	8d
13	F	2	Ireland	London	1s
13	M sailor		Kingston	Portsmouth	3d
13	M		Bristol	London	4d
13	M & F		Gosport	London	6d
14	M		Poole	Chatham	4d
14	M & F		Poole	Maidstone	8d
14	M & F		Bath	Gosport	8d
14	M ill		Folkstone	Bridgewater	6d
15	M		Winton	Greenwich	3d
15	M		Plymouth	London	4d
15	M		Plymouth	London	4d
15	M & F	2	Dorking	Swindon	1s
16	M sailor		On road		3d
17	M		London	Gosport	4d
17	F		Gosport	London	4d
17	F		London	Gosport	4d
17	M		Gosport	Croydon	4d
17	M		London	Christ Church	4d
17	M		London	Gosport	4d
17	M		London	Gosport	4d
17	F		London	Gosport	4d
17	M		Gosport	Shipley	3d
Not Relieved	17 people				
19	F	2	Southampton	London	1s
19	F		Southampton	Horsham	4d
19	M		St Helena	London	4d
19	M		Bristol	London	3d
19	Boy deaf/dumb		London	Portsmouth	4d
20	M & F	2	Southampton	London	1s
20	M A pauper				1s

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
20	M & F		Ireland	London	1s
21	M & F		Greenwich	Southampton	8d
21	F	2	Isle of Wight	London	8d
21	F	2	Gosport	London	8d
22	M & F	3	Fareham	Chatham	1s 6d
22	M		St Helena	London	4d
23	M & F	2	Windsor	Waltham	1s
23	M & F	2	Portsmouth	London	1s 4d
24	M & F		Southampton	Ireland	8d
Not Relieved	13 people				
25	F	2	Gosport	London	1s
25	F	1	Southampton	London	9d
26	M ILL		Weymouth	London	6d
26	M		London	Portsmouth	4d
26	M&F		Staines	Southampton	8d
27	M		Rochdale	Maidenhead	4d
27	M ILL		Andover	Guildford	6d
27	M		Portsmouth	London	4d
28	M INDIAN	-	-	-	6d
28	F	-	Kingston	Southampton	4d
29	F	-	Kingston	Southampton	4d
29	M&F	-	Alton	London	6d
29	F	2	Winchester	London	1s
30	M	-	Winchester	London	4d
30	M ILL	-	Plymouth	London	6d
30	M	-	Staines	Winton	3d
1 May	F	-	Windsor	Southampton	6d
1	M&F	-	Southampton	Runfold	6d
Not Relieved	11 people				
2	F	2	Southampton	London	1s
2	M&F	-	Onslow	Portsea	6d
2	M	-	London	Portsmouth	4d
3	F ILL	-	Poole	London	6d
3	F	2	Kingston	Ireland	4d
4	M&F	-	London	Exeter	8d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
4	M	4	Gosport	Scotland	2s
5	F	1	Winton	Brentford	6d
6	M	-	Staines	Gosport	4d
6	F	-	London	Southampton	4d
7	M	-	London	Southampton	3d
9	F	1 ILL	Winchester	London	9d
9	M	-	London	Portsmouth	3d
Not Relieved	18 people				
10	M	-	London	Southampton	4d
11	F	-	London	Southampton	4d
14	M	-	London	Gosport	4d
15	M&F	-	Kingston	London	6d
15	"	-	Canterbury	Liverpool	6d
16	M	-	Lymington	London	4d
16	F	4	Isle of Wight	London	1s 10d
16	F	2	Plymouth	London	10d
16	M&F	1	Southampton	London	1s
16	F	1	London	Southampton	6d
16	M&F	2	Winchester	Dartmouth	1s 3d
Not Relieved	12 people				
17	M&F	2	Brentford	Fareham	1s
17	M	-	Gosport	London	3d
18	M	-	Gosport	London	3d
18	M&F	2	Gosport	Southampton	1s
19	F	1	Battle	Romsey	6d
19	M&F	2	Southampton	London	1s 3d
20	A BLACK	-	East India	London	4d
21	F	2	Winton	London	9d
22	2 SAILORS	-	London	Portsmouth	6d
23	F	-	London	Gosport	4d
24	M	1	Halifax	Isle of Wight	8d
24	F	2	Isle of Wight	London	1s
25	M	2	Gosport	London	1s
25	M	1	Rochdale	London	4d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
26	M	-	London	Southampton	4d
26	F	1	Southampton	London	6d
26	M	-	Southampton	London	3d
27	M & F	2	Dorking	Oxford	1s
28	M	-	London	Portsmouth	6d
29	F	3	Gosport	London	1s 3d
30	M & F	-	Gosport	London	6d
Not Relieved	11 people				
31	M	2	London	Southampton	1s
1 June 1824	F	2	London	Southampton	4s
2	F	2	London	Southampton	4s
2	M & F	-	?	Staines	6d
4	M	-	London	Gosport	6d
4	M & F	3	Canterbury	Liverpool	1s 8d
5	M	-	Lymington	London	4d
5	F	3	Isle of Wight	London	1s 4d
6	F	2	Portsmouth	London	9d
6	M & F	1	Southampton	London	1s
Not Relieved	9 people				
7	M	2	London	Gosport	9d
8	M & F	2	Dorking	Arlesford	1s
8	M & F	-	London	Poole	8d
8	M	-	London	Southampton	4d
9	F	2	London	Portsea	1s
10	F	-	Southampton	Ireland	4d
10	F	3	Southampton	London	1s
11	F	1	Southampton	Liverpool	6d
12	F	-	Southampton	Brentford	4d
13	M & F	2	London	Gosport	1s
Not Relieved	12 people				
14	M & f	2	London	Winchester	1s
14	F	3	Gosport	London	9d
15	M & F	1	Southampton	London	10d
16	M	-	London	Winton	4d
16	M & F	-	Windsor	Southampton	8d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
17	M & F	3	Portsmouth	Liverpool	1s 3d
17	very poor ("a black")		Gosport	London	6d
18	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
19	F	2	Gosport	Ireland	9d
20	M	-	Winchester	London	3d
20	F	1	Winchester	Bedford	4d
20	M	-	Isle of Wight	Scotland	1s 6d
21	F	2	Canterbury	Isle of Wight	1s
22	M	-	Poole	Greenwich	6d
22	F	-	Southampton	London	4d
24	F	2	Southampton	London	8d
24	M & F ILL	-	Southampton	London	1s
26	F	4	Isle of Wight	London	1s 6d
20	F	3	London	Isle of Wight	1s 4d
20	M	-	London	Gosport	3d
21	M	-	Chatham	Portsmouth	3d
21	M	2	Gosport	London	1s
21	M	1	Gosport	London	8d
21	2 Scotsmen		Gosport	London	6d
22	M	2	London	Poole	1s
23	M & F	-	Gosport	London	8d
23	F	1	Gosport	London	6d
24	F	-	Southampton	Chelsea	4d
25	M & F	-	Portsea	Greenwich	8d
25	A foreigner	-	Portsmouth	London	6d
26	A BLACK	-	Portsmouth	London	6d
26	F	2	London	Winton	1s
26	M	2	London	Poole	9d
28	M	1	London	Romsey	4d
28	M	3	Gosport	London	1s
29	M & F	2	Portsmouth	London	1s 4d
29	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
30	F	2	Gosport	Greenwich	9d
2 July 1824	M & F	-	London	Southampton	8d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
2	A GERMAN	-	London	Fartton	4d
3	M & F	-	London	Isle of Wight	8d
3	"	3	Winchester	Lincoln	1s 4d
3	F	-	London	Portsea	6d
4	F	2	Poole	Chelsea	1s
5	M	-	London	Gosport	3d
6	M & F	-	Southampton	London	8d
6	M & F	3	Southampton	Canterbury	1s 4d
7	F	2	Southampton	London	9d
7	M & F	-	Portsmouth	London	8d
8	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
9	F	2	Gosport	Greenwich	1s
10	M	-	London	Portsmouth	4d
10	3 SAILORS		London	Portsmouth	1s 2d
11	M & F	3	London	Poole	1s 4d
11	M	3	London	Poole	1s 3d
12	F	1	London	Isle of Wight	8d
12	M & F	1	London	Portsea	10d
13	M	2	Gosport	London	1s
14	M	-	Gosport	London	3d
14	M & F	2	Portsmouth	London	1s 2d
15	M & F	-	London	Southampton	8d
16	M	-	London	Winchester	4d
16	F	2	Winchester	Staines	1s
Not Relieved	9 people				
17	M & F	4	Gosport		2s
18	M & F	2	Gosport	Dartmouth	1s
18	M	2	London	Isle of Wight	4d
19	M & F	-	London	Portsmouth	6d
19	M		Portsea	Greenwich	4d
21	M & F	-	London	Gosport	8d
22	M	2	London	Gosport	1s
23	M & F	-	Winton	London	6d
23	M	-	Southampton	London	4d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
24	F	4	Southampton	Kensington	1s 6d
Not Relieved	11 people				
25	M & F	2	London	Gosport	1s 4d
26	M & F	-	Gosport	Ireland	8d
26	F	3	Portsea	London	1s 4d
27	M & F	-	London	Winton	8d
28	F	-	London	Southampton	4d
29	M & F	-	London	Southampton	8d
30	4 shipwrecked seaman				1s 8d
31	M	2	Fareham	London	1s 2d
31	1 sailor	-	Gosport	London	3d
1 August 1824	M & F		Gosport	London	6d
1	M & F		Gosport	Staines	1s 4d
2	F	3	London	Southampton	1s 2d
3	2 East Indians		Gosport		
3	M		Gosport	Southampton	4d
4	F	1		Winton	6d
5	M&F	-	Gosport	Southampton	
5	M	2	Fareham	Hounslow	1s 3d
6	M & F	-	Southampton	Ireland	
6	A German				4d
7	M & F		London	Isle of Wight	
8	F	2	Gosport	Chelsea	1s
9	M & F	-	London	Winton	8d
9	3 shipwrecked sailors		Poole	London	1s
10	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
11	A swede		Gosport	London	4d
11	M & F	2	London	Southampton	1s
12	F	1	London	Southampton	8d
13	M & F	1	London	Gosport	1s
14	3 East Indians		London	Portsmouth	1s
14	F	1	Gosport	Onslow	8d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
Not Relieved	10 people				
15	F	1	Southampton	Ireland	10d
15	F	3	London	Southampton	1s 4d
16	M & F	-	London	Winton	8d
16	M & F	2	Gosport	London	1s 3d
17	F	1	Winton	London	8d
18	M & F	-	Fareham	Hammersmith	6d
18	4 sailors	-	London	Portsmouth	1s 8d
19	M & F	4	Southampton	Deptford	1s 6d
19	F	1	Arlesford	London	8d
20	M & F	-	Gosport	London	6d
21	2 East Indians	-			8d
21	M & F	-	Poole	Greenwich	6d
22	M & F	3	London	Gosport	1s 6d
22	F Irish	2			1s
23	M & F	-	Portsea	London	6d
24	F	1	Gosport	London	6d
24	F	2	Portsmouth	Chelsea	1s
25	M	3	Portsmouth	London	1s 4d
26	F	2	Reading	"Hopping"	1s 8d
26	M	-	London	Gosport	4d
27	F	2	London	Southampton	1s 2d
28	M & F	-	London	Southampton	6d
29	F	2	London	Winton	9d
30	M			"to hopping"	1s 6d
31	M & F	-	Andover	Chichester	9d
31	M	3	Southampton	London	1s 3d
1 September 1824	F	1	London	Gosport	9d
3	M & F	-	London	Southampton	6d
4	F	3		"to hopping"	1s 6d
5	M & F	-	Winton	London	1s
5	3 sailors	-	Portsmouth	London	10d
6	M & F	-	London	Winton	9d
6	M	2	London	Gosport	1s
7	F	2	?	London	1s



Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
7	M & F	-	Windsor	Winton	8d
8	M	-	London	Winton	4d
9	F	2	London	Gosport	1s
9	F	1	London	Gosport	9d
10	F	3	London	Southampton	1s
10	2 men			come to hopping	8d
11	F ill			To go to London	4d
11	F	1	Portsmouth	Chelsea	6d
12	M & F	-	Portsmouth	London	6d
13	F	4	Gosport	Greenwich	1s 6d
13	2 men shipwrecked		Poole	London	1s
14	M & F	-	London	Gosport	9d
16	Sailor & wife	-	London	Gosport	8d
16	F	-	Fareham	London	4d
16	2 Scotchwomen	6	Gosport	Edinburgh	2s 6d
17	M & F	2	Portsea	London	1s 2d
17	F	1	Gosport	London	6d
18	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
18	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
19	2 Italians		Portsmouth	London	8d
19	A poor boy run away	Egham workhouse			6d
20	M & F	-	Reading	Petersfield	8d
21	M & F	2	Southampton	London	1s 4d
22	F	1	Southampton	London	6d
23	M	-	Winton	Kensington	4d
23	F	3	Gosport	Edinburgh	1s 3d
24	M & F	-	Gosport	London	6d
25	3 sailors	-	Portsmouth	London	1s
26	M	-	Southampton	Staines	6d
26	M & F	2	Southampton	London	1s
26	M & F	3	Southampton	London	1s 4d
27	F	2	London	Southampton	1s
27	M & F	-	London	Gosport	8d
28	M	2	Winton	London	1s

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
29	M	-	Portsmouth	"	4d
29	F	2	"	"	1s
1 October 1824	M	-	London	Gosport	6d
2	M	-	"	"	4d
2	F	2	Gosport	Brentford	1s 2d
3	M	3	London	Romsey	1s 9d
4	M	2	Southampton	London	1s 2d
5	2 Scotsmen	-	Portsmouth	Scotland	6d
5	A German	-	Portsmouth	London	3d
6	M & F	-	Portsmouth	London	9d
7	M	2	Gosport	Ipswich	1s 2d
7	F	1	Gosport	Greenwich	8d
8	M & F	-	London	Gosport	6d
8	4 sailors	-	London	Gosport	1s 4d
9	F	-	Gosport	Staines	4d
10	M & F	2	Gosport	London	1s 4d
11	2 Germans	-	Portsea	London	6d
12	M	2	Portsea	Canterbury	6d
14	-	2 boys	Romsey	London	8d
14	M & F	3	Southampton	London	1s 6d
16	M & F	-	Southampton	Highgate	6d
18	M	1	Winton	St Albans	8d
19	F	1	Winton	London	8d
20	M & F	2	London	Winton	1s 4d
20	"	-	Gosport	Egham	8d
21	-	2 boys	Romsey	London	8d
22	M & F	1	Fareham	Maidstone	1s
22	A black man	-	London	Portsea	6d
23	F ill	2	London	Poole	1s 6d
23	M & F	-	Kensington	Southampton	8d
24	M	2	London	Blandford	1s
24	F	-	London	Gosport	4d
25	2 sailors	-	Poole	London	8d
26	M & F	2	London	?	1s 4d
27	M & M	-	London	Gosport	8d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
27	F	2	Gosport	Greenwich	1s
28	F	2	Gosport	London	1s
29	M	-	London	Portsmouth	4d
31	M	-	London	Portsmouth	4d
31	F	1	Gosport	London	9d
1 November 1824	F	2	Gosport	London	1s
1	M & F	2	Portsea	Chelsea	4d
2	M & F	-	London	Arlesford	8d
3	F	1	London	Winton	8d
4	M & F	1	Gosport	London	1s
4	M & F	-	Portsmouth	London	8d
5	M	-	Romsey	Chelsea	4d
5	M	2	Poole	Greenwich	1s 4d
6	M	4	Poole	Greenwich	1s 6d
7	F	2	Southampton	Margate	1s
7	F	3	London	Isle of Wight	1s 4d
8	M & F	-	London	Southampton	8d
9	F	2	London	Winton	1s
9	F	1	Gosport	Lincoln	9d
10	M & F	-	Gosport	London	8d
10	2 sailors	-	Poole	London	8d
11	M & F	2	Winton	Kensington	1s 3d
12	F	-	Portsea	London	8d
13	M	-	Gosport	Windsor	4d
14	M	-	Gosprt	London	6d
15	F	-	Winton	London	1s 2d
16	F ill	-	Romsey	London	1s
16	M	1	Southampton	Deptford	8d
18	2 shipwrecked seamen		Poole	London	1s
19	M & F		London	Winton	8d
19	M & F smallpox	-	London	"	1s
21	M	-	Fareham	Onslow	4d
21	F	1	Gosport	London	8d
22	F	-	Gosport	"	1s 2d
23	M & F	-	Winton	"	8d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
23	M	1	Arlesford	Deptfrd	8d
24	2 sailors	-	Gosport	London	8d
25	M & F	2	"	"	1s 6d
26	M & F	-	London	Winton	8d
26	M	2	London	Southampton	1s 4d
27	F	-	Winton	Canterbury	6d
28	M & F	1	"	London	1s
29	2 sailors	-	Gosport	London	8d
1 December 1824	F ill	-	London	Romsey	1s
1	M	2	London	Romsey	10d
2	M	-	Poole	London	4d
3	M	-	Poole	London	4d
3	M	-	Gosport	London	6d
4	F	2	Southampton	Greenwich	1s
5	M & F	-	Southampton	London	8d
5	4 poor sailors	-	Weymouth	London	1s 4d
6	F	3	London	Gosport	1s
7	M	-	Gosport	Chelsea	4d
7	M & F	-	?	London 8d	
7	East Indian	-	Portsmouth	London	6d
8	M & F	2	London	Fareham	1s
9	2 sailors	2	Witton	London	8d
9	F	1	London	Gosport	8d
10	M & F	-	London	Portsea	8d
10	M	2	Poole	London	1s
11	Ill sailor & a man	2	Plymouth	London	1s 6d
12	M & F	3	London	Isle of Wight	1s 4d
13	F	-	London	Gosport	4d
13	F	-	Gosport	Deptford	4d
14	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
15	F	2	London	Southampton	1s
16	M & F	-	London	Gosport	8d
17	F	2	Gosport	London	1s
18	F	1	Gosport	London	8d
18	F	2	Portsea	London	1s

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
19	M	-	Portsmouth	Chelsea	6d
19	F	3	Portsmouth	Sandwich	1s 6d
20	M & F	-	Winton	London	8d
20	M	2	London	Poole	1s 4d
21	2 sailors	-	Plymouth	London	6d
21	M	2	London	Gosport	1s
21	M & F	-	Gosport	London	8d
21	F	2	Southampton	London	1s
22	M	1	Winton	London	8d
23	M & F	-	Fareham	Brentford	8d
23	M	2	Portsea	Chelsea	1s
24	M	3	Portsea	Chelsea	1s 4d
24	2 Indians	-	Portsmouth	London	2s
25	4 shipwrecked seamen		?	London	1s
26	M	-	Fareham	Windsor	4d
26	M	2	Winton	London	1s
27	M	1	Winton	Into Suffolk	6d
27	F	-	London	Romsey	4d
28	M	2	London	Romsey	1s
29	M & F	2	Gosport	London	1s 4d
29	F	-	Gosport	London	6d
30	M	2	Winton	London	1s 4d
1 January 1825	F	1	Southampton	Brentford	8d
1	4 sailors shipwrecked		?	To London	2s
2	F	2	London		1s
3	M & F	3	London	Gosport	1s 4d
3	M	2	London	Portsmouth	1s 4d
4	F	-	Gosport	London	1s
5	6 poor men	-	Poole	London	2s
5	M & F	2	London	Fareham	1s 6d
6	M	2	London	Southampton	1s 4d
7	M	-	Portsea	London	6d
7	M & F	2	London	Gosport	1s 6d
8	2 Germans	2	Gosport	London	1s
9	F	3	Gosport	London	1s 8d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
11	F	2	Winton	London	1s
15	M	1	Southampton	Windsor	1s
15	M	2	London	Poole	1s
15	M	2	London	Southampton	1s
15	M	1	Gosport	London	8d
15	M	-	Gosport	London	6d
16	F	2	Gosport	Brentford	1s 6d
16	M & F	2	Southampton	Rochester	1s 4d
17	M ill	2	Portsea	London	1s 8d
17	M	-	Portsea	London	4d
18	M	-	London	Isle of Wight	1s 6d
18	M	2	London	Winton	1s
20	M & F	1	London	Poole	9d
21	M & F	-	Plymouth	London	6d
22	F	2	London	Southampton	1s
22	F	1	Chelsea	Southampton	8d
23	M & F	2	Gosport	London	8d
24	M & F	3	Gosport	London	1s 4d
24	M	-	Portsea	London	4d
25	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
25	2 seamen		London	Poole	8d
26	M	2	London	Gosport	1s
26	M & F	2	London	Gosport	1s 4d
27	F	1	London	Southampton	6d
28	3 sailors		Portsmouth	London	1s
29	M & F	-	Winton	London	1s 4d
29	M	3	Winton	Ireland	1s 4d
29	M	2	Winton	Scotland	1s
30	M	-	Isle of Wight	London	4d
31	M & F	1	London	Gosport	1s 2d
31	F	1	London	Winton	10d
2 February 1825	2 sailors		Poole	London	1s
2	M	-	Southampton	London	1s 6d
3	M	-	Gosport	London	6d
3	M	-	Fareham	Gravesend	1s 4d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
4	M	-	Gosport	London	4d
4	M	-	London	Southampton	1s 6d
5	F	-	London	Southampton	2s
6	F	-	London	Romsey	8d
7	M	-	Portsmouth	London	1s 4d
7	M	-	London	Winton	1s
8	F	-	London	Gosport	4d
9	F	2	London	Winton	1s
10	M	1	Gosport	London	10d
11	M	-	Winton	London	8d
12	F	2	London	Portsmouth	1s
12	M	-	London	Fareham	4d
12	F	2	London	Gosport	1s
13	M	1	Greenwich	Gosport	1s 4d
13	F	1	Greenwich	Winton	1s
14	F	2	London	Winton	1s 2d
15	M	-	Portsmouth	London	4d
15	F	-	Portsmouth	London	6d
16	F	2	London	Southampton	1s
17	F	1	London	Southampton	1s
17	M & F	-	London	Winton	8d
18	M	-	Chelsea	Southampton	4d
18	M	2	London	Southampton	1s 4d
19	F	2	London	Portsmouth	1s
20	M	-	Onslow	Poole	6d
21	M	2	Windsor	Blandford	1s 4d
21	M & F	1	London	Gosport	8d
22	F	2	London	Gosport	1s 4d
22	F	3	London	Portsea	1s 8d
23	M & F	3	Gosport	London	1s 6d
23	M	2	Southampton	Kensington	1s 3d
23	M	-	London	Winton	6d
24	M & F	1	London	Winton	1s 3d
24	M	2	Bagshott	Gosport	1s
25	F	1	London	Portsmouth	8d

Date	M/F	Children	Where from	Where to	Relief given
26	M	-	London	Portsmouth	1s 4d
26	F	1	Southampton	London	10d
27	M	3	Southampton	Lewis	1s 2d
28	M & F	-	Winton	Dorking	8d
28	M & F	2	Winton	London	1s 6d
1 March 1825	M & F	3	London	Winton	1s 10d
1	M & F	4	Gosport	London	2s
3	2 M	-	Gosport	London	1s
4	F	3	London	Winton	1s 4d
5	2 M	-	Portsmouth	London	1s
6	F	2	Gosport	Brentford	1s 4d



## Appendix 2

Rules Workhouse Bletchingley Workhouse  
SHC 1/48/80 1816 SHC

1. The directors shall have power to nominate and appoint a master and mistress well qualified for that trust if approved by the justices
2. The master and mistress be sober and orderly themselves not give to swear or lie etc and that they see the orders performed
3. The bill of fare be punctually observed by the master and mistress until any alteration be made therein by a majority of the directors.
4. No person be taken in or partake of the provision of the house without order from a justice of the peace or the overseers of the poor for the time being upon pain of exclusion.
5. If the butcher who is to serve the house in his turn for a month or quarter does not constantly supply it with such pieces of meat as the directors shall think most profitable for the use of it the two persons who visit on the market day shall go to the other shops in this parish where they may be best furnished.
6. All the shops in this parish shall have their respective turns to serve the house in any commodities except in such year as the owner thereof shall happen to serve the office of overseer.
7. Shop keepers are always to send notes of the weight and price with their goods which are to be filed by the master as soon as he has made proper entries of the said goods in the books of this house.
8. All bills be paid once a month by the overseer out their collection money.
9. The master and mistress do take particular care of all persons old and young who are admitted and capable of work that they may be taught and made fit for some trade and daily employed in work and service suited to their age and ability.
10. The master and mistress do take care and see the family in bed by 8 o'clock and their candles out during the winter half year but in summer half year they shall be in bed by nine o'clock.
11. Master to see all rise at proper hour.
12. They have their breakfast in the winter at half year at eight in the morning and in the summer half year by seven and dinner by one all the year.
13. They have their supper at six in the winter half year and in the summer at seven.
14. They sit at their meals in a decent manner with hands and face washed hair combed and clothes brushed.

15. The master say grace before and after meals and that the children be taught the same and likewise the Lord's Prayer.
16. and 17. The house be swept from the top to bottom every morning and washed once a week. That they be called to work in summer at six and in the winter by seven o'clock.
18. and 19. No person go out of the gate without the Master or Mistress's leave.
20. and 21. The children and others that are able shall spin wool for mop yarn and sew and knit and be moderately tasked and if they are idle and do not their tasks or make great waste that then they shall go sometimes without meals and have corporal punishment as the master directs.
22. Special care be taken that children make no waste and this article be punctually enquired into by the Directors.
23. The directors in their turns shall make enquiry relating to the observance of these orders and to minute down all complaints and grievances to be laid before all or a majority of the Directors on the next Sunday or monthly meeting and if need be referred to the justices.
24. The directors shall meet every Sunday after evening service to advise together upon the minutes taken by them the week past and agree upon any fresh rules as occasion shall require.
25. The Master take care to enter down the earnings of the poor and that all monies for work done by them be paid into the hands of the overseer of the poor for the time being for the use of this house and if any person refuse to work as many hours as the master requires such person neglecting shall be punished.
26. Each child have every day two hours to read and write at the direction of the Master and Mistress.
27. There be prayers in the house morning and evening and a chapter of the Bible distinctly read before prayers.
28. The master and mistress shall every Lord's Day attend at the public worship with as many of the house as are not hindered by a just reason.
29. On the Lord's day before church or after dinner the master shall read or cause to be read the psalms and Lessons proper for the morning service and after evening prayer the psalms and lessons for the evening service and also a section or chapter out of the *Whole Duty of Man*
30. Children or others go not abroad on Sundays but continue in the house and read some portion of the holy scripture or the *Whole Duty of Man*.
31. The children be never suffered to go into the town or streets or to play unless they behave themselves well and do their tasks.

32. That particular care be taken of the education manners and behaviour of the old and young and that every great fault as lying, swearing, stealing, breaking windows panes, hedges and fences be noted down in weekly bills to be laid before the vestry after morning service.

33. The master and mistress use all possible care to promote piety, peace and good order in the house, that they treat the elderly people calmly and tenderly and to lay all material complaints before the directors or justices without attempting to remove them themselves and that they suffer no tobacco to be smoked in the lodging rooms.

34. The master do keep a weekly account of this house both of what comes in and what goes out or is expended as the directors shall from time to time appoint.

35. If any person shall sell any goods or things that are seized by the overseers of the poor or embezzle any goods or work of the house they shall be punished as the law directs.

36. Neither the master or mistress buy, sell or suffer any distilled liquors to come into the house.

37. The master and mistress take care that no provision or stores be improvidently wasted or suffered to putrefy or gather uncleanness nor any other way be misapplied.

38. Lastly that these orders and rules be distinctly read to the poor of this house by the master once a month or oftener by order of us.

Directors

Overseers of the Poor

## Appendix 3

Egham workhouse inventory SHC 2516/2/11

A listing of furniture and goods:

8<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> August 1832

### **Men's Bedrooms**

#### Number 1:

Occupied Williams and George Hibbard

A stump bedstead; sacking fair requires nailing and repair

A feather bed ticking good requires cleaning; Two old blankets one good; a rug coverlid good;

Two feather bolsters good; Ticking wants washing; One old sheet; One good sheet; A small round three legged table; One old tinder box;

#### Number 2

Occupied Baldwin and Tindals

A stump bedstead; Sacking requires cleaning and tightening; A rug coverlid good; A feather bed with new tick a few feathers wanting; One pair of good sheets; One flock bolster ticking bad and dirty; A feather pillow ticking worn out; One good blanket; Two old blankets;

#### Number 3

Bed unoccupied: A stump bedstead wants repair; a good sacking;

#### Number 4

Stump Bed unoccupied; Bedstead requires repair and new sacking or new laths wanted.

#### Number 5

Occupied Barnance and Adams

A stump bedstead-repair; sacking getting bad must be repaired; a bad old flock mattress; a feather bed; the ticking wants washing waxing and repair; a flock bolster with sack cover nearly worn out; an old flock bolster sacking worn out; One old blanket worn out; 1 old blanket wants mending; One new blanket nearly; One pair of good sheets; One rug coverlid good;

#### Number 6

Occupied by Copper and Goodchild

A good stump bedstead requires cleaning and repair; A feather bed sacking wants repair; Two small pillows worn out; A large pillow with very dirty ticking; A pillow with cover belongs to Copper; A feather bolster the ticking bad and dirty; Two new blankets; One old blanket Coppers; Two new sheets; Two rug coverlids good;

#### Number 7

Occupied by Boice and Newman

A stump bedstead; A good sacking wants nailing; A good feather bed; A feather bolster with bad dirty ticking; A pillow dirty; One new blanket; One old blanket; One pair of new sheets; One tidy coverlid; One old coverlid wants repair;

#### Number 8

Occupied by Dean and Burgess

A stump bedstead wants repair; An old feather bed with bad ticking; Another feather bed the ticking fair but dirty; A small bolster with dirty sacking; Three old blankets; One new blanket; One pair of new sheets; A good coverlid

#### Number 9

Occupied by William Herd

A stump bedstead wants repair; sacking good; a feather bed ticking had a very bad flock bolster and ticking; two very old blankets; one new blanket; one old sheet; one new sheet; a good coverlid.

#### Number 10

Occupied Wellbelove and Roberts a boy

A stump bedstead wants repair; A good sacking wants nailing; A feather bed ticking wants mending; A feather bolster ticking is worn out; One tidy old blanket; One bad blanket; One new blanket; One pair new sheets; A new rug coverlid;

#### Number 11

Occupied William Dewey

A stump bedstead sacking wants repair; A feather bed the ticking worn out; A worn out bolster in same state; Two old blankets nearly worn out; One new blanket; One pair of new sheets; A rug coverlid; Eight brown and one white chamber pots; a large armchair; a four legged stool; coppers; three clothes boxes and an old stool; a lantern;

#### Bedroom for the sick

Two old bedsteads with bad sacking; A feather bed bad ticking; A four poster bedstead the sacking worn out; An old armchair; A light wooden stool; A very imperfect closed stool and frame;

#### Store closet

Three new blankets; Two rug quilts or coverlids; An old quilted coverlid; A drugget coverlid; A copper warming pan; A pair of bellows; Beggars Drivers hat old; Two blankets; A quantity of diaper webbing for bandages;

## **Women's Bedrooms**

### **Number 1**

Occupied Mrs Hibbard

A stump bedstead wants repair; sacking wants repair; a feather bed sacking bad; a flock bolster bad; a feather pillow bad; two new blankets; one old blanket; an old piece of flannel; one pair of new sheets; a new rug coverlid;

### **Number 2** unoccupied

A stump bedstead; Sacking bad; A small feather bed good; A large feather ticking bad; A very old quilted counterpane

### **Number 3**

Occupied by Mrs Bowers and Clara Busk

A stump bedstead wants repair; A good feather bed; A flock bolster ticking bad; Two old blankets and one new blanket; A pair of new sheets; A new rug coverlid and a bad old coverlid

### **Number 4**

Occupied by Ann Ranmore

A stump bedstead good; Sacking good wants nailing; A feather bed the ticking good but dirty; A feather bolster good ticking; A feather bolster bad ticking; One new blanket and one old blanket; One new sheet and one old sheet; One coverlid;

### **Number 5**

Occupied by Elizabeth Fitch

A stump bedstead good; Sacking good wants nailing; Feather bed ticking bad; Feather bolster ticking bad; An old tidy coverlid; Two old blankets; One new blanket; One old sheet and one new sheet.

### **Number 6**

Occupied by Mary Whitmore

A stump bedstead wants repair; Sacking good wants mending; A feather bed ticking must be washed; A flock bolster ticking bad; A feather pillow ticking bad; Two very old blankets; One old sheet; One new sheet; An old coverlid; A night stool wants repair; a pan broken; 2 wooden chairs; 4 clothes boxes; a long carriage trunk.

### **Lying in rooms**

#### **Number 1**

A very old turn up bedstead wants repair has old bad sacking

#### **Number 2**

Occupied by Sarah Powell and child

A stump bedstead; Good sacking; A feather bed ticking good but binding wants repair; A flock bed ticking good; A feather bolster the ticking dirty and bad; Two flock pillows bad ticking; Three new blankets; One pair of new sheets; A tidy old coverlid wants washing;

#### **Number 3**

Occupied by Mrs Godfrey

A stump bedstead good; Sacking good wants nailing; A feather bed; A feather bolster; Two old blankets and one new blanket; One pair new sheets; A good coverlid

#### **Number 4**

Occupied Elizabeth Archer

A stump bedstead good; sacking good; A feather bed good; A feather bolster good; One new blanket; Two old blankets; One pair of good sheets; A good coverlid wants washing; Two old boxes; An old wood chair; A horsehair chair; A four legged deal table; A mahogany night stool wants repair and cleaning; A pan partly broken; A night stool wants repair; A pan rather broken; Two wooden chairs

### **Master's Bedroom**

A large arm chair with a night stool attached; A tinder box complete; A set of checked bed furniture for the stead removed; A rush bottomed chair; An empty deal chest; A bracket and clock; Two horse hair bottomed chairs

### **Landing on Stairs**

A small table and clothe; A water jug; a stair broom; an empty deal box;

### **Committee Room**

A tin tea board; A large wooden armchair; One fancy wooden chair; Four horse haired bottomed chairs with dimity covers; A four legged deal table; One table with drawers and green baize cover; One four legged deal rough stool; A four legged mahogany table with deal top; An old oak chest with lock and key; A seed bag; Two small ivory pipes; A bag with mending pieces; A small ironing blanket; A beggar driver's coat and hat; A lunatic jacket; Two funeral palls with a bag; A bundle of baby linen in a piece of flannel; A bag with corks; Three and a half clean sheets; Three roller towels; One old truss; One new truss; A rush work blanket ; A Dutch cloak; Five pieces of carpet on floor;

### **Cupboard contents**

Two iron candlesticks; two flat tip candlesticks; A pair of snuffers; A candle box or drawer; Two pairs of new shoes; Two cork screws; A wooden tinder box; A box staple large; A pan with brimstone and matches; A small pickle jar; An ink bottle; A blacking pot and brushes; A hearth stone; A cauliflower bag; An oak knife box; A small tea canister; Three tea tin caddies;

### **Entrance Passage**

A beer stand; A tin two gallon beer can; An oak chest; An old tin pot; A waste beer tub; An iron hammer; An old grate and fence; Two heath brooms; A long handled gravel hammer

### **Pantry**

A small wood closet bad; An old chain for scales; Iron beam and a pair of copper scales; Weights old 14 lb 7 lb 4lb 2lb 1lb ½ lb ¼ lb 2 oz 1 oz and ½ oz; Four tin meat pans; One old meat pan; A copper coffee pot; Three tin saucepans; Four stone bottles; Four glass bottles; Two four legged stools;

A potato steamer; Four octagon china plates; Two circular plate; A broken butter boat; A bushel flour measure; A wooden tray; Two four legged stools; One large stool; Three large broth pans; Four small pans; Sixteen various plates; Four yellow pans; Four brown baking pans; Three white dishes; Four broken dishes; Two brown pickle jars; One white oatmeal jar; small wooden cupboard bad; One yellow white basin; An iron bound pickle tuba tin square tray; An iron cleaver; Three old spoons; A rolling pin; A tin pepper box; A wood meat tray; A tin sieve (the dresser should be continued on the other side of pantry and a good meat safe be put up)

### **Kitchen**

A small round table; A large table; A table with drawer; A large old fashioned deal table; Three iron wedges; Two small clothes brushes; A pair of shears; A hand bill; Two toasting forks; A small pair of bellows; A poker and pair of tongs; An old iron square shovel;

A kettle trivet; A footman hanging trivet; A long iron fender; Two irons for clothes; Two stands for irons; An ironing blanket;

### **Cupboard under the stairs**

Thirteen broth pans; Fourteen glass bottles; Three pairs of old tongs; An old upright deal box; An old coffee mill; Five and half pairs of old garments; A tin pot with old nails; Latches and bolts; Two pot lid frying pans;

### **Deal Chest in passage**

Nine bundles of flax; Five bundles fine flax; ½ Cwt of jersey wool; A set of weavers harness; Wool clamp and boot tree;

### **Dining or Sitting Room**

Four long deal stools require repair; Short stool; Two long deal tables wants repair and made level; Two table cloths want repair; A short deal table attached to weak bad state; A four



legged high stool wants repair; A four legged deal table with copper box; A deal table under back wall; Window wants repair; A small fancy stool; An old box for cradle; One rush bottom chair; One old mahogany chair; One wicker bottom chair; One wooden chair; A three feet deal table with weighing standard; Ten tin beer pots

### **Washhouse**

Eleven various old plates; Five wood trenchers; Two four legged stools; Two clothes baskets; Two square wash tubs; Two coppers; One small brass kettle; One iron upright candle stick; One iron skimmer; One iron meal fork; Two small tin pots; One small saucepan; One tin colander; One tin bowl; One old knife board; One old four legged stool; Two large iron pots; One small iron pots; Four wood pails; One plate; One plate rack wants repair; An old chopping meat stool; A wooden soap dish; An old square shovel; One large clothes horse; Two small clothes horse bad state;

A proper table wanted in the washhouse

A proper stool wanted in the washhouse and a tub

### **Yard**

A water tub stand getting bad; three pigs; a cast iron trough; an eleven round flat ladder in passage;

### **Number 7**

Occupied by Eliza Daniels

A stump bedstead; A good sacking wants nailing and tightening; A feather bed good ticking but dirty; Two feather bolsters ticking bad; Two new blankets; One old blanket; One pair new sheets; a good coverlid;

### **Men's clothes**

#### **Richard Williams**

One pair of shoes tidy; a pair of dirty trousers; a pair of blue trousers; a pair of bad worsted stockings; one bad shirt; one fair shirt wants mending; two very old waistcoats; an old red flannel frock; an old blue jacket; an old blue coat; a dirty old hat; two old coloured neck kerchiefs;

#### **Richard Trundell**

A blue coat wants mending; a brown coat worn out; a tidy smock frock wants mending; a bad black waistcoat; an old waistcoat worn out; a pair of fustian trousers wants washing and mending; two shirts getting bad; two pairs of stockings bad; a pair of half boots getting bad; a pair of velveteen breeches wants lining and repair; an old working jacket wants repair; an old silk neck cloth bad; a working hat has not any other;

David Balwin

A pair of bed breeches; a pair of breeches wants mending; two pairs of old corduroy breeches; a red striped waistcoat bad; a waistcoat wants repair; a brown coat wants repair; beggars driver's coat bad; An old grey great coat wants washing and mending; two pairs of shoes; a pair of worsted stockings; an old hat; two shirts wants repair; a pair of stockings; a pair of cotton stockings; a pair of tidy shoes; a cotton neck cloth; a beggar driver's hat bad;

William Adams

A bad old blue coat; three old waistcoat not worth mending; a good jacket wants washing and mending; two very bad pairs of breeches; a fair pair of corduroy breeches wants washing and mending; an old hat; a shirt good; a pair of stockings; a pair of light shoes good; a pair of breeches bad; an old pair of leather gaiters; an old waistcoat wants washing and mending; an old blue coat wants washing and mending; an old hat;

William Barnance

An old working jacket wants mending; a worn out waistcoat; a good velveteen waistcoat; a good coat wants repair; a tidy grey coat; a pair of very bad breeches; a tidy black hat; a tidy pair of shoes; 1 pair of stockings; a tidy pair of corduroy breeches wants lining; two cotton shirts; a tidy working waistcoat; a swansdown waistcoat wants mending; a hat; a calico neck cloth;

Thomas Goodchild

A good pair cashmere trousers wants repair; a pair of trousers wants repair; a good pair of blue trousers; a blue coat; a grey coat; a tidy old blue coat; a very dirty cap; a pair of fair boots; a pair of corduroy trousers wants mending and lining; two linen shirts rather bad; a green plush jacket and waistcoat; two silk neck cloths; one cotton neck cloth; a bad old hat; a fair grey hat; three pairs of stockings fair;

Thomas Copper

A tidy green great coat; a tidy grey great coat needs repair; nine tidy waistcoats; three old flannel waistcoats; two old waistcoats; four pairs good breeches; one pair of old breeches; a good black coat; an old brown coat; an old great coat; three pair good worsted stockings; two pairs of old worsted stockings; one pair of cotton stockings; two pair of shoes; two calico caps; one flannel cap; five shirts fair

John Newman

Two tidy black coats; a worn out blue coat; two worn out black coats; a light waistcoat wants repair; good pair cashmere breeches; an old black pair; a tidy old hat; an old working hat bad; a shirt bad; two pairs of stockings; one pair old shoes; one new pair shoes; a pair of black velveteen breeches; an old cotton neck cloth bad; a bad under waistcoat; a fair under waistcoat wants washing and mending; working waistcoat nearly worn out wants washing and mending;

William Boice

An old grey greatcoat wants mending; a small coat very bad; an old jacket nearly worn out; two pair of breeches nearly worn out; a tidy black coat; a tidy waistcoat; an old flannel waistcoat worn out; a black waistcoat worn out; an old hat; a pair old leather gaiters; a shirt; two pairs of stockings bad; a pair of shoes; a drab great coat;

William Hero

A tidy pair of breeches wants repair; a dirty old bad pair breeches; an old blue coat wants mending; a dirty old waistcoat wants mending; two pairs of very bad shoes; two pairs bad worsted stockings; two shirts good; a pair of old cashmere breeches dirty and no linings; a flannel waistcoat wants mending; an old black waistcoat wants mending; a red plush waistcoat wants buttons on; an old working jacket wants washing and mending; a blue cotton neck cloth bad;

Richard Wellbelove

A worn out pair of stockings; a worn out great coat; a worn out pair trousers; a tidy pair of breeches; a worn out waistcoat; two waistcoats wants washing and mending; a pair of new shoes; a pair of good worsted stockings; a pair of working breeches bad; old looking waistcoat bad; 2 neck cloths bad; an old hat bad; two shirts;

William Dewey

A bad pair of trousers; a black coat wants repair; one shirt bad; one pair of shoes; some rags for stockings; a bad pair of trousers; an old waistcoat bad; a very bad dirty jacket;

**Boys' clothes**

Henry Meads

A worn out pair of trousers; two shirts; a pair of stockings; a pair of bad shoes; a decent pair of trousers; a waistcoat; a jacket; a leather cap;

George Hibbard

Three pairs worn out trousers; a tidy waistcoat wants repair; a tidy pair of trousers; a good jacket; two shirts; two pairs of stockings; one pair shoes;

Henry Deane

A small dirty jacket; a blue waistcoat; a pair of trousers worn out; two shirts; a good jacket; two cotton handkerchiefs; one pair shoes; a leather cap; two pairs of stockings;

James Burgess

Two shirts; pair of shoes; one pair of stockings; two old jackets; one pair of trousers;

John Roberts

Dirty bad pair trousers; two shirts; a pair of shoes; an old jacket; a middling hat.

**Black hole**

An old bedstead with middling sacking;

An old chair

## **Women's clothing**

### **Mrs Hibbard**

Two bad old shifts; a bad black gown; a tidy blue gown; two tidy black bonnets; two pair of worsted stockings bad; a flannel petticoat tidy; a stiff petticoat tidy; three old aprons bad; three neckerchiefs; three old dirty caps; two nightcaps; shoes all to pieces;

### **Mrs Bowers**

A bad old petticoat; two old shifts; one new flannel petticoat; one old stuff petticoat; one old gown; three day caps; two night caps; two blue neckerchiefs; one checked apron; no shoes; no stockings;

### **Ann Hanmore**

One tidy shift; one bad shift; an old cloak; an old cotton gown; two tidy flannel petticoats; one bad flannel petticoats; one old Linsey Woolsey petticoat; two blue aprons; one white apron; one pair very bad stockings; one pair bad shoes; three tidy day caps; two old neckerchiefs; one old beaver bonnet;

### **Elizabeth Fitch**

Two shifts; two flannel petticoats; an old black petticoat; one tidy gown; two old gowns; two old neckerchiefs; three day caps; two old night caps; one pair bad stockings; one pair new shoes;

### **Mary Whitmore**

Two old shifts; two old flannel petticoats; one old upper petticoat very bad; one tidy cotton gown; one bad stuff gown; one bad apron; one pair of bad shoes; one neckerchief; three middling caps; one old bonnet; one pair stockings bad;

### **Eliza Daniels**

Two old cotton gowns; one Linsey Woolsey gown; a new flannel petticoat; one Linsey Woolsey petticoat; one new shift; a pair of bad shoes; a pair old blue stockings; a pair old white stockings; two day caps good; two nightcaps good; a bad old bonnet;

### **Sarah Powell**

Three old shifts; one pair old shoes; two pairs of old worsted stockings; two old flannel petticoats; one stuff petticoat; two tidy cotton gowns; one old cotton gown; one old muslin neckerchief; three muslin day caps; two nightcaps;

### **Elizabeth Godfrey**

Two tidy shifts; a pair of bad shoes; a pair of bad stockings; two good flannel petticoats; a Linsey Woolsey petticoat; a cloth petticoat; one bad cotton gown; one tidy black stuff gown; one tidy cotton gown; two very old neckerchiefs; one good neckerchief; two tidy day caps; two old nightcaps; an old red cloak;

Elizabeth Archer

One bad shift; one good shift; one bad pair of shoes; one bad pair of stockings; one good flannel petticoat; one tidy flannel petticoat; one tidy callimanco; one old cotton gown; two tidy cotton gowns; three neckerchiefs; two coloured aprons; one tidy apron; three day caps good; two night caps good; an old bonnet; a good red cloak;

Clara Bush

One tidy shift; one old shift; a pair of dirty stockings; one tidy flannel petticoat; one old flannel petticoat;

One old stuff petticoat; two old frocks; one pin clothe; no shoes

**Various Articles claimed by the paupers in the house**

Mrs Archer

A coffee pot; a teapot; a cup and saucer; a half pint tin pot;

Mrs Godfrey

Two coffee pots; a tin pint pot; a saucer; a vinegar bottle; a tin pepper box; two teapots;

Mrs Hanmore

An old knife and fork; A pewter spoon; two saucers and two cups; a wood salt cellar; an old tin pepper box; an iron tea kettle; two old ewer jugs; a teapot;

Eliza Daniels

A black tea pot; a cup and saucer; a tin scrap pot;

Powell

A coffee pot; a cup and saucer; a knife and fork; an earthen pippin's tin teapot;

Mrs Hibbard

A coffee pot; a tea kettle; two saucers and one cup; a pint china jug; two quart basins; two knives and two forks;

Mrs Bowers

A china teapot; one spoon; two basins; a sugar jar; a beer pot; a cup and saucer; one plate;

Elizabeth Hitch

A flat tin candlestick; a knife and fork; an iron spoon; a tin quart saucepan; one white plate; a quart basin; a cup and saucer; a black teapot;

Mrs Whitmore

Two half pint basins; a white plate; a knife;

Thomas Goodchild

A coffee pot

Thomas Cooper

A coffee pot

William Dewey

A coffee pot

Richard Wellbelove

A quart basin

**Household furniture brought into the house by Charles Hunter master of the house**

A two leaf round table; A two armed wicker chair; Five small chairs; A round oak table; Two corner cupboards; A two leaf deal table with drawer; A tin tea board; A looking glass; A pair of bellows; A fire shovel; Three flat irons; A toasting fork; A round clothes basket; A four post turn up; Bedstead; Two feather beds; Two feather bolsters; Five feather pillows; Four and half pairs of blankets; Two and half pairs of sheets; Two quilts; One counterpane; A set bedstead furniture; Four small carpets; A eight day clock; One deal table with drawers; A swing looking glass; Two boxes with clothes; A small table and cloth; A water jug; A hair broom; A large white dish; Three blue edged dishes; Two white dishes; Seventeen various plates; Two butter boats; Two blue jugs; One basin; One ale glass; Two runners; Two wine glasses; A small tumbler; A glass mustard cruets; A looking glass; A chest of drawers; An iron cow stake; A large brown pan; A flower pot; an axe; One oil lamp; One coffee pot; A large tin boiler; A copper boiler; A copper tea kettle; An iron saucepan; A frying pan; A grid iron; A four post old bedstead; Three pronged two saws;

**Pest House Garden and Coal shed**

An old shovel; A dung prong; A garden rake bad; An iron paddle for weeds; An old spade; A new spade; A two grained fork; A bearing barrow; Two small carpenters stools; One dibble – various others; Five small shoes; One bad hoe; A wicker small basket; A seed bag; An old night stool; Two four legged square stools; A stump bedstead no sacking must be lathed; A bad feather bed with sacking bad; Two pillows feathers bad dirty ticking; A wooden chair; A gravel sieve; An old boiler; A chimney bar large; iron hoops various sizes;

## Appendix 4

Walton-On-Thames Workhouse Inventory 15<sup>th</sup> June 1827 SHC P60/3/6

### Number 1 Bedroom

Left hand men's room

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered; Chaff bed in ticken case; Old flock bolster; Two sheets; Two blankets; A rug;

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted numbered; Flock bed; Flock bolster; Chaff bolster; Two sheets; Two blankets; Two rugs;

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted numbered; Feather bed and chaff bolster; Two sheets; Two blankets and one rug

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered

Two large deal coffers; One oak coffer; An old trunk; A piece of board;

Iron ring fixed to the floor chain padlock and key;

### Men's Room Adjoining

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered;

Small full feather bed; Feather bed in a clean linen tick; Chaff bolster; Two sheets; Two blankets; A rug

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered; Feather bed; Chaff bolster; Three blankets; Two sheets; A rug

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered; A good feather bed; A bolster; Two old blankets; One new blanket; Two sheets; A rug

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered; Flock bed in a clean linen tick; Full feather bolster; Two sheets ;One blanket; One new blanket; piece of green baize; One rug

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered; Full feather bed in a clean linen full tick; A bolster; Two sheets; Two blankets one new; Two sheets; A rug

Eleven brown chambers; Large deal coffer; An old chair;

### Number 3 Bedroom

Stove fixed in brick (back faulty); Hanging glass in a black frame; Two small oval prints; One large print; Four chimney ornaments; Two china salts; Walnut tree chest of five drawers; Two rows of pegs; stout lock and key to door;

### Number 4 Front Bedroom

4ft 6ins stump bedstead; 4ft 6ins sacking bottom flock mattress; Feather bed bolster; Pillow; Two sheets; Two old blankets; A rug; Two new blankets; Stump bedstead; Feather bed and bolster; Three feather pillows; One chaff pillow;

Two sheets; One new blanket; One old rug; A deal table; A painted night convenience; An old chair; Two wainscot clothes chests; Stock lock and key to door

#### Number 5 Store Room

Five old bed rugs; Four new blankets; Three pieces of blanket; One new sheet; One quilt; Four old bed ticks; A large linen chest covered with leather; A large deal chest; An oak coffer; Three old tables; One old chair; A painted clothes chest; A small hair trunk; Several bound books; An old funeral pall; A square box; Part of a bedstead; Five strong linen sheets; A pole fire screen; Two tin candlesticks with tinderbox; Two grey coats; Two pairs of grey trousers; One waistcoat; One black coat; Two waistcoats; A pair breeches; One bonnet; Two stuff gowns; One old cotton gown;

#### Number 6 Middle Room

4ft 6ins iron bedstead painted and numbered; Flock bed in an old tick; A flock bed; old chaff bolster; Two sheets; One blanket; Two new blankets; A rug;  
Iron bedstead painted numbered; Iron bedstead painted numbered; Old bed clothes; wainscot coffer; Two deal boxes; Two brown chambers;

#### Number 7 Further Left Hand Room

Iron bedstead painted and numbered; Small feather bed in a bordered tick feather bolster; Two sheets; One blanket; Two rugs;  
Iron bedstead painted and numbered; Large full feather bed; Chaff bolster; One old blanket; One new blanket; Two sheets; Rug;  
Iron bedstead painted and numbered; Old chaff bed; Bolster; Two sheets; Two rugs; One old quilt; Piece of blanket; Part of old wainscot drawers; Deal clothes chest; Old table; Piece of carpet; Three brown chambers;

#### Number 8 Small Room

Iron bedstead painted and numbered; Iron bedstead painted and numbered; Very good chaff bed; Very old bed tick sheet and rug; Stock lock and key to door;

#### Number 9 Further Right Hand Room

Iron bedstead painted and numbered; Large full feather bed and bolster; Two sheets; One blanket; One new blanket; A rug;  
Iron bedstead painted and numbered; Large feather bed and bolster; Two blankets; One new blanket; Two sheets; A rug; Wainscot drawers; Two clothes chests; Small deal box; An old table; Nest of shelves fixed; Four brown chambers; Stock lock and key on door;

#### On Stairs

Fixed dinner bell; Dinner Block Pulleys

#### Hall

Stout iron trivet; Iron bar in chimney and hooks; Large iron boiler with brass cocks; Two pair of tongs; Two seats and supports fixed on each side of fire place; 6ft seat fixed; Two stout frame



deal table 7ft 6ins by 2ft 4ins; Deal table 6ft by 2ft 4ins; Elm top table; Two 12ft forms nearly new;

Two long deal forms; A row of wooden pegs fixed; long iron hook fixed; Four flat irons; Tin reflector and lamp; Iron stand; Chamber candlestick; Nine iron candlesticks; Two leaf clothes horse; Two tinder boxes; Tin lamp; Brass candlestick; deal frame settle with seat;

#### Master's Room

Fixed stove; Small fender tongs and poker; Brass handle bell pull; Cranks and wires to bell; Cupboard on the right of fire place three shelves and divisions with locks and keys; Two small cupboards on front left of fire place with shelves and locks in doors; Tin canister; Seven table knives and forks; One silver tea spoon; Thirteen small prints; Plaster ornament; Tea caddie an inlaid caddie; Wainscot chest of three drawers with brass handles; Six old chairs; Small oval wainscot table; Large wainscot dining table; An eight day dial in a case; Stock lock and key on door

#### Mill house

A very excellent wheat mill as fixed with iron fly wheel; Deal bin; Two deal bins; Pair of new deal steps; Tin scoop bowl and shovel; Stock lock and key on door; Padlock and chain fixed to mill; Padlock handle; Old deal box knife board; Wire sieve; Two saws; Two rows of wood pegs

#### Pantry

Large deal bread bin with division; Large flaps and stand; 7ft 3ins stout dresser board back; 7ft 3ins lining and supports shelf over the dresser board; Pair of butter scales; Beam and hook; Six brass weights; Five iron weights; Tin can; Thirty six tin pint pots; Six half pint pots; Deal basket; One carving knife; Lock and key to door; Pair of large iron beam planks;

#### Cellar

Two thirty six gallon iron bound casks; Two 18 gallon iron bound casks; Five wood bottles; Shelf fixed and one other large meal bin with division; Old sieve; Large beer stand; Smaller beer stand; small tub; Four stone bottles; Small pickling tub and cover; A wooden cover; Lock and key to door;

#### Small hall

Stout deal table; Stout form; Four shelves fixed on ledges stout bars and support is fixed in fire place; Deal kneading trough; Scraper; Large iron prong; Brass warming pan; Sundry cups saucers and tea pots; Stock lock and key on door

#### Washhouse

Stout brewing copper fixed; Stout brick and iron wooden work top; Stout cover; Partition copper fixed brick and iron; Partition work lead curb and copper covers; Iron shovel; Iron fresh pork; Brass ladle; Two pails and bowl; Ash tub; Four washing tubs; Iron brown cask; Large pickling tub; Large copper pottage pot and cover; Two large copper saucepans (1 cover); Tin

bowl; Three colanders; Brass skimmer; Trenchers; Rolling pin; Six pewter plates; Twelve white plates; Seven old plates; Pitcher pan and dish; Trivet and meat stand; Two tin coffee pots; Five small red pans; Copper frying pan; Pot board; Cinder sieve; Iron coal scuttle;

#### Tool House

Corn screen; Six half cwt iron; Large bathing tub iron bound; Two dock irons; Hoe; Two deal boxes

pair of wood arms; Pair of iron arms; Saw; Three spades; An old bedstead; Prongs faulty; Sundry iron hoops; Small nest of shelves fixed;

#### Garden

The whole of the under and upper crop;

Garden consisting of potatoes beans peas carrots lettuce cabbage plants (trees currants gooseberry apples crossed out)

Seat as fixed and supports

#### Yard Sheds

Hog trough; Old kneading trough; Two deal poles; Two hog tubs; Two old tubs; Turf cart with iron arms;

Box barrow; Water tub and stool; Bell pull cranks wires and bell; Bell front gate; Two padlocks and keys

#### Wearing apparel - Men

##### Chitty:

Taken out Two coats; one pair of trousers; one shirt pair of stockings; a dress on

##### Stonel:

Jacket; trousers; shirt and dress on

##### New:

Trousers; shirt; stockings and dress on

##### Holmes:

Coat ;shirt; stockings and dress on

##### Draper:

Two coats; jacket; shirt and dress on

##### Hart:

Coat ;shirt ;stockings and dress on

##### Simmonds:

Dress on

##### Buckingham:

Breeches; waistcoat; shirt; coat and dress on

##### Mott:

Jacket ;shirt and dress on

Stiles:

Clothes in chest and dress on

Cole:

Hat; shirt ;stockings and dress on

Wearing apparel – Women

Lydia Glazier:

One shift and dress on

Dame Wheatley:

Stuff gown red cloak shifts and stuff dress on

Mrs Elsly:

Cap; shift and dress on

Mrs Williams:

Stuff gown; shift and dress on

Mrs Bailey

Gown 2 aprons shift and dress on

Mary Newel

Gown apron shawl shift and dress on

Ann Skinner:

Coat ;bonnet; pinafore and dress on

Betty Westfold:

Two aprons; shift ; Two caps; gown; cloak and dress on

Betty Violet:

Coat ;shift and dress on

Pol Weller:

Gown; Two aprons; Three caps; bonnet; Two handkerchiefs and dress on

Dame Port:

Two black gowns; Two shifts; Two petticoats; black bonnet; cloak; black shawl; Two pairs stockings and dress on

Mary Smith:

Two petticoats; Two shifts; Two gowns; shawl; Three aprons; cloak and dress on

Susan Brown:

Shift ;stockings and dress on

(Two straight waistcoats)

The effects comprised in this inventory of effects at the poor house are valued at the sum of £213 10s

## Appendix 5

Godstone workhouse inventory 1828 SHC P25/4/281

### Garrett

Four feather beds; One flock bed; One chaff bed; Four bedsteads; Five bolsters; Five blankets; Four rugs; Four pairs of sheets; One chest; One closed stool; One chair

### Landing

One bedstead; One pair of sheets;

### Middle garrett

Two beds; Two bolsters; Three bedsteads; Three blankets; Two rugs ; Two pairs of sheets; Two boxes

### Chamber 1

Four beds; Two bedsteads; Three bolsters; Five blankets; One rug; Two small tables; Chest of drawers; Three sheets

### Chamber 2

One bedstead; One chest; One sheet

### Chamber 3

One bed; One bedstead; Three blankets; Two sheets; One bolster; One pillow ;One rug; One chair; One chest; Three boxes; One table; One set of hangings; Two hair brooms

### Chamber 4

One bed; One straw mattress; Two blankets; Two sheets; One rug; One bolster; One table; One chest; One stool

### Chamber 5

Two beds; One bedstead; One bolster; Two sheets

### Chamber 6

One bed; Two bedsteads; One chair. One grate

### Store room

A chest drawers; four chests; one joint stool; seven blankets; one rug; one bed tick; two boxes sundry articles of old clothes; five 5 coarse gowns; one bed pan; three pairs shoes; two hats; sundry books; three flannel petticoats; three flannel bed gowns ; three cotton gowns; five shifts; three calico bed gowns; six handkerchiefs; two aprons; two pieces patch work quilting; one cloak; one strait jacket; 2 cloths; seven pairs of sheets; 2 ash cloths; two

warming pans; one table; one stool; a pair crutches; one pair brand irons; seed; sixty yards of strong cloth; 22 ½ yards of print fustian; ¼ yard linsey; five yards course cloth

#### Pantry

Five pickling tubs; one bread tub; sixteen crocks; four tumbler glass bottles; wooden bottles; two pairs sealers and sundry weights; one wooden tray; one form; two 2 wooden bowls; three stone bottles

#### Wash house One

Eight wooden dishes; two earthen dishes; eight wooden bowls; eight trenchers; one tin kettle; one can; one iron pot; five saucepans; four pails; two forms; two high tubs; one crock; one pot; one garden rake and hoe; garden line; one spade; one colander; one frying pan

#### Wash house Two

2 copper furnaces and brewing vat; one tub; one handle dish; one sieve; wooden horse; two forms; strainer; two coal scuttles; 1 sieve; three hand towels

#### Bakehouse

One baking tray; one cupboard; two forms; one lantern; three large ropes; one pair wooden scales; weights; clothes line; one gallon measure; two 2 wedges; flour; one rolling pin

#### Cellar

Six drink tubs; five sieves; one wheelbarrow; two iron ringers; one mattock

#### Kitchen

Four tables; one cupboard; one desk; five forms; ironing board; four chairs; one joint stool; a large fire range poker and fender; six flat irons; eight candlesticks; four iron stands; five tin pots; one salt box; one boiler; six table clothes

#### Vestry room

A large table and frame; eleven chairs; one cupboard; one fender and set of fire irons; pair bellows; a hand bell; two jars; one candle box; one slate; a hearth brush; one book case

#### Outdoors

300 faggots; barrows; two large hogs; straw

## Appendix 6

Bletchingley workhouse Inventory 1824 SHC27271/48/96

### Men's Inventory:

#### Stephen Akehurst:

Two round frocks; Three waistcoats (one brought in); Two changes (home made); Two pairs of breeches; Two pairs of stockings; One pair shoes; One great coat; Two old aprons; Two hats.

#### James Laker:

Two round frocks; One jacket; One change; Two pairs of breeches; Two pairs of stockings; Two aprons; Two pairs of shoes; Two hats; One great coat.

#### Thomas Crawley

Two round frocks; Two waistcoats; Two changes; One pair breeches; Two aprons; Two pairs of stockings; Two hats; Two pairs of shoes; One great coat.

#### Stephen Holman

Two frocks; One jacket; Two changes; Two pairs of breeches; Two pairs of shoes; Two hats; One apron; One great coat.

#### Benjamin Jupp

Two round frocks; Two jackets; Two changes; Two pairs of breeches; Two pairs of stockings; One hat; Two aprons; One pair of shoes.

#### Master Wood own clothes

Three round frocks; Four waistcoats; Two changes; Two pairs of breeches; Two pairs of stockings; Two aprons; one pair of shoes; Two hats; One great coat.

#### Thomas Dorton

Three round frocks; Three waistcoats; Two changes; Two pairs of breeches; Two aprons; One pair of stockings; Three shoes; One hat; One great coat.

#### William Gile

Two round frocks; One jacket; Two changes; One pair of breeches; Two pairs of stockings; One hat; One pair of shoes.

#### William Longhurst

Two frocks; Two jackets; Two changes; Two pairs of trousers; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; One 1 hat.

#### L. Tonson

Two round frocks; One jacket; Two changes; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; Two hats; Two pairs of trousers.

Richard Smith

Two round frocks; Two jackets; Two changes; Two pairs of trousers; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; One hat; One great coat.

James Hares

One frock; Two pinafores; Two under coats; One upper coat; Two changes; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; One hat.

George Holman

One frock; Two pinafores; One under coat; One upper coat; Two changes; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; One hat.

William Chalwood

Two pinafores; Two changes; One hat; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of trousers; One pair of shoes.

Women's inventory

Ann Peters

Two gowns; One pair of stays; Two upper-coats; Two under-coats; 2 changes 2 pair of stockings 1 pair of shoes 2 bonnets 3 aprons 2 handkerchiefs 4 capes

Sally Best

2 gowns 1 pair stays 1 upper coat and under one 2 changes 2 pairs of stockings 1 pair shoes 2 capes 1 bonnet 3 aprons 2 handkerchiefs

Dame Hapgood

2 gowns 2 undercoats one upper one 2 changes 2 pairs of stockings 1 pair shoes 2 capes 1 bonnet 2 aprons

Dame Ashdown

1 gowns 1 pair stays 1 upper coat and 2 under 2 changes 1 pairs of stockings 1 pair shoes 3 caps 1 bonnet 2 aprons 2 handkerchiefs

Jane Hapgood

Two gowns; One pair of stays; One upper coat; Two under coats; Two changes; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; Three caps; One bonnet; Two aprons; Two handkerchiefs.

Inventory girls

Jane Skinner

One gown; One frock; Two pairs stays; Two under coats; Two changes; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; Three pinafores; Two tuck aprons; One bonnet.

Elizabeth Lee

Two frocks; Two undercoats with stays in them; Two upper coats; Two changes; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; Two pinafores.

Kerey Jenner

Two frocks; Two undercoats with stays in them; Two upper coats; Two changes; Two pairs of stockings; One pair shoes; Two pinafores; Two bonnets.

Lisa Taile mother has kept her clothes.

Mary Chalwood

One frock; Two undercoats with stays in them; Two upper coats; Two changes; Two pair stockings; One pair of shoes; Two pinafores; Two bonnets.

Jane Chalwood

One frock; Two undercoats with stays in them; Two upper coats; Two changes; Two pairs of stockings; One pair of shoes; Two pinafores; Two bonnets.

Dame Holman

Wears her own clothes (provided with pair of shoes)



## Appendix 7

Lingfield workhouse inventory SHC2399/8/4

3<sup>rd</sup> May 1816 SHC

### West Garret

One feather bed; One bolster; Two blankets; One bedstead; One leaf oak table; Two oak chests; Two deal chests; Two chairs; Two bedsteads

### First Garret

6 feather beds 1 chalf bed 7 pairs of sheets 2 pairs of blankets 4 oak chest 1 close stool 2 chairs

### Second Garret

8 feather beds 1 chalf bed 7 pairs of sheets 7 pair of blankets 1 oak chest 6 boxes

### East Garret

2 feather beds 2 pair sheets 2 bedsteads 1 oak chest 2 boxes 2 chairs

### Landing to chambers

1 oak chest 1 oak table 1 warming pan

### Number 1 chamber

1 feather bed 2 sheets 2 blankets 1 bedstead 1 oak chest 2 boxes 1 table 2 chairs

### Number 2 chamber

1 feather bed 2 sheets 2 blankets 1 bedstead 3 boxes 2 chairs

### Number 3 chamber

1 feather bed 2 sheets 2 blankets 1 bedstead 1 box 3 chairs

### Number 4 Chamber

2 feather beds 2 sheets 4 blankets 1 bolster 1 bedstead 1 oak chest 3 boxes 2 tables 1 joint stool 1 chair

### Number 5 Chamber

1 feather bed 2 sheets 2 blankets 2 bolsters 1 bedstead 2 oak chests 3 boxes 1 table

### Number 6 Chamber

1 feather bed 2 sheets 2 blankets 1 bedstead 1 oak chest 1 box 1 chair

### Number 7 Chamber

1 chaff bed 2 sheets 1 bolster 1 piles 1 bedstead 2 boxes

### Number 8 Chamber

A store room

Five oak chests; two boxes; two baskets ; two clothes baskets; 14 lb hops; a warming pan; eight sickles; one iron curtain rod; forty eight sheets; one rug; £2 2s cheese

#### Number 9 Chamber

A store room

Four oak chests; One warming pan; One chair ; seven wooden mops; A quilter frame; A pair of flax scales; Two pair of hand carts; One 1 stock cart

Materials: fine thread; course thread; plain linsey; course linsey; brown fine shirting; white shirting; brown shirting; towelling; sheeting; men's round frocking; boy's round frocking; fine flax; fine spinning (out of house); course spinning (out of house)

#### Number 10 Chamber

Two feather beds; Two bolsters; Two pillows; Two sheets; Four blankets; One bedstead; One night stool; Two joint stools; One chest with drawers; One table; Two chairs; Three boxes; One chest; Four blue curtains

#### Number 11 Chamber

Two feather beds; Two bolsters; Two pillows; Two sheets; Two blankets; One bedstead; Two oak chests; One joint stool; One box

#### Number 12 Chamber

Two feather beds; One chaff bed; Four sheets; Four blankets; Two rugs; One homemade hanging; Two bedsteads; One chest with draws; Two boxes; Two chairs; One night stool

#### Number 13 Chamber

Two feather beds ; Two bolsters; Four sheets; Four blankets; One cradle

#### A small room adjoining the school

Two oak chests; Two oak forms; One oak sieve; One old pickling tub with lime; One copper boiler; One iron foot; Two iron dogs; One bittle; Three iron wedges

#### School room

Twelve spinning wheels; One oak arm chair; Five oak tables; One dresser; Four stools; One long form; One chair; One iron hoop pitcher; One pair of irons; One pair of brand irons; One pair of tongs; One pair of scales with two weights; One pair of sheep shears

#### Hall

Four woollen wheels; Two pairs of stock cards; Two weavers looms warping hutch and frame; One reel; Five tables; Five stools; Twenty chairs; One beam and scales; Weights; One iron boiler; One pair of pot hooks; Two cast iron fire dogs; Firepan and tongs; One pair of bellows; Twenty five corn sacks; Four bags; One basket; Thirty three tin pint pots; Four tin kettles

#### Kitchen

Ten candle sticks; Four iron spits; Two pair tongs; A mortar and pestle; One pair of snuffers; A knife steel; A bread grater ; Two pepper boxes; Knife box; Twelve forks and twelve knives; One warming pan; Two gallon measure; A 30 hour clock ; Sixty one wooden trenchers; Thirty seven porridge dishes; Four tin saucepans; One handle dish; Three hand bills; Four box irons; Eight heaters; Three flat irons ;One dinner bell; One basket; Three tables; Nine 9 chairs;

One hand saw ; Hedge shears; Chopping knife; Two quart pots; Two pint pots; Six cups and saucers; Three basins; One tea pot; Two runners; Two tumblers; One wine glass; One pair of bellows; Three pairs of pot hooks; Two pairs of grid irons; Fire pan and tongs; Two fire irons; Two dozen white plates; Four white dishes; Four pewter dishes

#### Pantry

Four pickling tubs full of pork and one half full; Five ale tubs one full and one half full; Two small beer tubs one full; Five wooden bottles; One bacon sealer; One wood funnel; One handle; Seventeen crocks five with lard; A flour tub with cover; Three bread baskets; Three carving knives; One hammer; One pair of pinchers; One pair tongs; Five gimblets; A marking iron; One scale beam with flour scales weights; One beer pale; One tin gallon pot; Four porridge pots; Two pitchers; Two oil bottles; Five baskets; Four and half hams of bacon; Frying pan; Grab hooks; Two welsh dishes; Four brown dishes; One tin funnel; A hair brush; A chopping knife

#### Wash house

One brewing vat; Two pickling tubs; One large tub; Ten tubs; Six water pales; Two oven slices; Two oven hoes; Two oven forks; A pair of bellows; One pair of tongs ; One sieve; Two handle dishes; Two iron furnaces; One copper; One 1 table; Three stools; Twenty six chamber mugs

#### Out doors

Three wheelbarrows; One water cart; Five spades; Four shovels; Nine hoes; Four spades; Two gravel hammers; Two prongs; One garden rake; A line and rake; A water pot ; Two road scrapers; One ladder; Five store hogs and one sow

## Appendix 8

Inventory of goods William Paice's Cottage Lingfield SHC 2589/371

3<sup>rd</sup> January 1823

### Bedroom

Two feather beds and bedsteads with curtains one green and one pink checked;

One feather bolster and pillow; Four blankets; Two old quilts; Three sheets;

One five drawer brown chest; Six brown chairs; One large painted chest; One looking glass;

### Kitchen

One large oak round table; One small deal square table; One deal dresser with shelves and draws; Four chairs; One brass warming pan; Two beer barrels; Two iron boiling pots; One cooling and one wash tub; Three brass candlesticks and two iron; Eighteen blue and white plates; One small looking glass; Two fitches of bacon

## Appendix 9 Operation of Labour Schemes in Surrey

Year ending 25 March Poor Law Returns	1815-1816	1816-1817	1817-1818	1818-1819	1819-1820	1820-1821	1821-1822	1822-1823	1823-1824	1824-1825	1825-1826	1826-1827	1827-1828	1828-1829	1829-1830	1830-1831	1831-1832	1832-1833	1833-1834
Abinger	£654	£908	£918	£962	£889	£955	£770	£748	£613	£585	£562	£522	£496	£515	£538	£461	<b>£420</b>	<b>£422</b>	£409
Albury	£601	£673	£655	£888	£795	£863	£746	£624	£667	£477	£574	£564	£644	£648	£733	£748	£703	<b>£737</b>	£734
Betchworth	£1190	£1012	£1124	£1351	£1307	£1077	£807	£838	£1096	£1103	£1246	£1194	£1087	£1111	£1244	£1263	£1257	<b>£1167</b>	£984
Bletchingley	£1122	£1512	£1190	£1469	£1285	£1229	£1026	£880	£961	£987	£1000	£847	£1054	£990	£1203	£1378	<b>£1184</b>	<b>£1454</b>	£1324
Great Bookham	£881	£728	£904	£724	£820	£928	£943	£1045	£803	£622	£515	£561	£604	£541	£590	<b>£532</b>	<b>£606</b>	<b>£445</b>	£424
Cranleigh	£992	£1068	£1376	£1327	£1330	£1380	£1100	£917	£949	£998	£1236	£1015	£956	£1105	£1061	£1310	£1357	<b>£1309</b>	£2380
Elstead	£357	£633	£518	£867	£710	£742	£829	£634	£583	£448	£411	£503	£472	£484	£433	£701	<b>£683</b>	£611	£439
Ewell	£862	£747	£719	£794	£803	£641	£645	£670	£639	£673	£640	£711	£691	£728	£753	£737	<b>£836</b>	£919	£962
Farnham	£2775	£3550	£7150	£5775	£5208	£4635	£5219	£4083	£5383	£5173	£5674	£6157	£4489	£4438	£4539	£4716	£6458	<b>£5553</b>	<b>£4656</b>
Frensham	£943	£1498	£1465	£2001	£1274	£1274	£1245	£1101	£1079	£948	£1233	£1204	£1254	£1333	£1274	£1545	£1709	<b>£1141</b>	<b>£800</b>
Godstone	£1483	£1561	£1900	£1412	£1720	£1830	£1298	£1395	£1233	£1460	£1391	£1478	£1153	£1091	£1477	<b>£1436</b>	<b>£1352</b>	<b>£1407</b>	<b>£1313</b>
Godalming	£3406	£3629	£5457	£4145	£4015	£4231	£3386	£3079	£3017	£2874	£2876	£2988	£3096	£3464	£3659	£4079	<b>£4012</b>	<b>£5148</b>	<b>£4986</b>
Horley	£836	£943	£1010	£958	£1049	£1098	£983	£1029	£1021	£1237	£1252	£1252	£1005	£879	£936	£1091	£1311	£1245	<b>£996</b>
West Horsley	£714	£870	£1023	£1193	£1259	£932	£584	£537	£464	£357	£487	£524	£524	£486	£536	£585	£648	<b>£633</b>	£477
Send and Ripley	£805	£1260	£1510	£1587	£1379	£1317	£1252	£1287	£1017	£1079	£1136	£1500	£1589	£1324	£1378	£1306	£1700	£1877	<b>£1516</b>
Shere	£946	£1168	£1543	£1410	£1298	£1311	£1049	£1026	£994	£1098	£1104	£1069	£1063	£1270	£1385	£1384	£1746	£2817	<b>£1498</b>
Witley	£2019	£2201	£3409	£3563	£2479	£2730	£2429	£1876	£2088	£2337	£2274	£2291	£2448	£2017	£2517	£2281	£2595	<b>£2826</b>	£1899
Worplesdon	£1424	£1471	£1939	£1838	£1726	£1919	£1600	£1182	£1235	£1212	£1204	£1732	£1383	£1423	£1404	£1498	£2032	<b>£2000</b>	£1928
Woking	£1065	£1462	£1857	£2109	£1628	£1974	£1406	£1857	£1499	£1592	£1411	£1597	£1935	£1763	£1875	£2290	£2701	<b>£2161</b>	<b>£1937</b>

**Figures in bold** where labour scheme operated : OPERATION OF LABOUR RATE IN SURREY FROM RETURNS ROYAL COMMISSIONERS: REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSIONERS POOR LAW REPORT 1834 APPENDIX D xxxviii(44): SURREY pp 55D-73D; OPERATION OF LABOUR RATE 1831-1834 INFORMATION FROM PARISH VESTRY MINUTES SHC: BPP Select Committee Returns 1818 V; 1821 IV; 1824 IV.39; PP 1830-31 XI.205; PP 1835 XLVII

Appendix 10 Farnham Labour scheme 11<sup>th</sup> November 1833–17<sup>th</sup> March 1834  
SHC 1505/Box 23/2

Occupier	Quantity of Land	Labour Rate 1s 6d in £ Needs to Employ	Needs to Pay	Employment Payments	Paid Employment
Winton	380 acres arable	9 men full time	£57 9s 9d	21 men part-time	£60 7s 6d
George Smith	7 ¼ acres hop ground, 9 ½ acres	No detail	£16 10s	4 men employed all the time and 6 in January	£15 7s 6d to pay cash 3s 6d
Charles Knight	22 acres hop ground, 135 arable	8 men	£71 5s	employs 14 men part time 65–75 yrs; 8 men over 21 yrs, 18–21 yrs 2 men, 12– 15 yrs 2 boys	no figure given
Richard Crumps	33 acres hop ground, 270 acres arable	14 ½ men	£41 11s 9d	3 boys 12–15 yrs ; 3 boys 15– 18 yrs ; 7 men 18–21 yrs ; 12 men 65–75 yrs	£58 15s
Stevens	23 acres hop ground, 209 acres arable	10 ½ men	£23 14s 9d	1 boy 13 yrs, 2 boys 14yrs, 1 boy 18yrs, 13 men	£24 15s
William Wilkins	Hop ground 1 acre, arable 1 ¼ acres	1 man 1 month constant	no detail	no detail	no figure given
William Crumps	10 acres hop ground;	3 men	no detail	no detail	no detail
Richard Phillips	7 acres arable	1 man 1 month, 2 men for 2 weeks	15s	no detail	pays £1
Mrs C. Ellis	6 acres hop ground; 9 ½ acres arable	1 ½ men constantly	£4 1s	some work for 4 men	£4 10s
S. Vanners	8 ½ acres hop land; 40 acres arable	no details	£10 9s 3d	£11 17s 6d	no details
G. Stovolds	98 acres arable	3 ¼ men	£7 6s	£12	6 men some work
J. Smith	8 ½ acres hop ground; 50 acres arable	3 ¼ men	£4	£15 17s 6d	7 men some work
Henry Nash	2 acres hop ground, 49 acres arable	2 men	£4 7s	some work 5 men	no detail
R. Sampson	8 acres hop ground, 13 acres arable	2 men	£5 11s 9d	some work for 6 men	£6 15s paid
T. Cooper	2 ¾ acres hop ground, 45 arable	2 men constantly and 3 men some work	£4 7s	no detail	£3 5s paid and £1 5s in cash
R. Attfield	7 acres hop ground, 7 acres arable	1 ½ men constantly	£5 1s	1 man and 1 boy constantly	£7 19s 6d
J. Garfield	½ acre hop ground, ¼ acre arable	2 men some work	£1 7s 6d	£2	no details
Mr Alexander	6 acres hop ground	1 man constantly	£6 0s 9d	£11	2 men some work
T. Turner	8 acres hop ground, 1 acre arable	1 man constantly	£3	£3	2 men some work
T. Baker	60 rods hop ground	1 boy constantly	£2 5s	£4 15s	1 boy 16 yrs
Messrs Atfield	16 acres hop ground, 6 acres arable	2 ¾ men constantly	£12 18s	£16 12s 6d	no details

Occupier	Quantity of Land	Labour Rate 1s 6d in £ Needs to Employ	Needs to Pay	Employment Payments	Paid Employment
T. White	8 acres arable	1 man 6 weeks	£3 16s 6d	£4 15s	5 men part time
J. Hoarding	1 ¾ acres hop ground; 2 acres arable	no details	£1 4s 9d	no details	no details
G. Barlow	9 acres arable	1 man 6 weeks	no details	no details	no details
H. Nichols	9 acres hop ground	1 ½ men constantly	£4 10s	£6	3 men some work
W. Cranham	4 acres hop ground; 19 acres arable	1 ½ men constantly	£1 9s 3d	£1 10s	3 men some work
W. Cowdery	2 acres arable	1 man some work	£3 12s	£3 16s 8d	no details
C. Mays	6 acres hop ground; 5 ½ acres arable	4 men some work	£5 0s 6d	£6 5s	no detail
J. Matthews	4 ½ acres hop ground	2 men some work	£2 18s 6d	£3	no details
J. Cranham	2 acres hop ground; 6 acres arable	2 men some work	18s	£1	no details
H. Nash	11 acres hop ground; 29 acres arable	3 men	£7 4s 9d	£6 13s 6d	5 men some work to pay cash 11s 3d
J. Nash	8 ¾ acres hop ground; 8 ¾ acres arable	1 ¾ men constantly	£6 13s 6d	£7 2s 6d	3 men some work
S. Crawle	½ acre hop ground; 8 acres arable	2 men some work	12s	15s	no details
Messrs Paine	135 acres hop ground; 351 acres arable	no details	£311 7s 6d	no details	55 men some work; 18-21 yrs 6 men 15-18 yrs 16 men 12-15yrs 10 boys 65-75 yrs 2 men above 75 yrs 2 men
J. Butts	7 acres hop land; 39 acres arable	no details	£11 0s 6d	£33 5s	no details
J. Kimber	1 ¾ acres arable;	1 man some work	13s 6d	£1	2 men 1 week work
R. Robinson	7 ½ acres hop ground	1 ¼ men	no entry	no entry	1 man
Mrs Stovold	6 acres hop ground; 180 acres arable	6 men	£9	£7 2s 8d	7 men work; account not settled
H. Harris	3 acres hop ground; 1 ½ acres arable	4 ½ men to employ	£5 5s	£14	8 men some work
R. Nicols	11 acres hop ground; 1 acre arable	2 men	£4 1s	£4 5s	4 men some work
J. Wells	5 ½ acres hop ground; 2 ½ acres arable	1 man constantly and 4 men some work	£4 7s	£4 10s	no details
J Cook	2 acres arable	1 man one month	£1 6s 3d	£2	3 men some work
J Betts	7 acres hop ground; 20 acres arable	2 men	£8 10s 3d	no detail	no detail

Occupier	Quantity of Land	Labour Rate 1s 6d in £ Needs to Employ	Needs to Pay	Employed Payments	Paid employment
J. Bartholomew	11 acres hop ground; 25 acres arable	2 ¾ men	£16 11s 6d	£15 7s 8d	3 men and boys constant work; 7 men some work
Mr Ward	¾ acre land	1 man some work	£1 10s	£1 10s	1 man 3 weeks work
Mr Fleming	1 acre hop ground; 1 acre arable	1 man some work	£1 7s 9d	£2 10s	2 men some work
T. Jones	2 ¼ hop ground; 10 acres arable	2 men	£3 0s 6d	£2 10s	to pay cash 10s 6d
W. Gillian	2 acres hop ground; 5 acres arable	½ man some work	15s	£1	2 men 1 week's work
Mr Elson	8 acres arable	1 man some work	12s 9d	£1	1 man employed 2 wks
S. Holt	5 acres arable	no details	12s	£2 18s	1 man some work
Mr Barretts	5 ½ acres hop land; 10 acres arable	no details	£3 12s	no details	no details
M. Rivers	5 acres hop ground	no detail	£3 7s 6d	£4 4s	4 men some work
James Wells	1 acre hop ground; 8 acres arable	no detail	no detail	no detail	no detail
W. Emments	¾ acre hop ground; 40 acres arable	no detail	no detail	no detail	2 men and boy "worked out rate"
J. Arenells	8 acres hop ground; 58 ½ acres arable	no detail	£12 1s 6d	no detail	no detail
Messrs Knight	8 ¾ acres hop ground; 90 acres arable	4 ½ men	£25 4s	£31 1s 6d	7 men
W. Kimber	1 ¼ acres hop ground; 2 ¼ acres arable	1 man 1 month	£1 2s 6d	£1 5s	2 men
M Page	no entry				
C. Stevens	5 acres hop ground	no detail	£4 1s	£9 10s	2 men
J. Edwards	no detail				
S. Williams	9 acres hop ground; 11 acres arable	2 men	£8 11s 6d	£9 10s 3d	3 men
M. Hole	17 acres arable	no detail	£2 15s 6d	£2	2 men some work to pay cash 15s 6d
S. Baker	3 acres hop ground; 4 acres arable	no detail	£1 13s 9d	£1 10s	1 man 3 wks to pay cash 3s 9d
G. Knight	18 acres hop ground; 64 acres arable	no detail	no detail	no detail	no detail
W. West	17 ½ acres hop land; 87 arable	6 men	£23 12s 6d	£40 2s 6d	14 men employed some work
F. Turner	4 acres hop ground; 56 acres arable	2 ½ men	£4 12s 6d	£4 16s 8d	employed 10 men some work
S. Andrews	24 acres hop ground; 164 cres arable	9 ½ men	£33 14s 3d	£34 10s	14 men some work
T. Simmonds (Bourne Place)	16 ½ arable	no detail	£3 9s	£5 17s 2d	5 men
T. Soimmonds	3 acres hop ground; 23 acres arable	1 ¼ men	£7 18s 3d	£10 7s 6d	4 men
W. Baker	4 ¼ hop ground; ½ acre arable	no detail	£2 10s 3d	£1 11s 4d	2 men some work
T Stovolds	6 acres hop ground; 54 acres arable	3 men	£22 7s 6d	£27 10s	8 men some work



Occupier	Quantity of Land	Labour Rate 1s 6d in £ Needs to Employ	Needs to Pay	Employment Payments	Paid Employment
J. Peacocks	3 acres hop ground; 3 ½ acres arable	no detail	£2 0s 6d	£4 10s	1 man £4 10s
S. Stevens	21 acres hop ground; 370 acres arable	no detail	£44 13s 3d	£71 7s 6d	no detail
J. Darvills	6 acres hop ground; 30 acres arable	no detail	£11 11s 3d	£13 6s	6 men some work
C. Waterman	2 ¼ acres hop land	no detail	£5 5s	£6 18s 10d	4 men
W. Kenseys	2 ¼ acres hop ground	not complete			
J. Carter	6 ½ acres arable	not complete	£2 17s	£3 3s 4d	5 men some work
T. Princes	1 acre hop ground; 4 acres arable	not complete	£1 3s 3d	£1 3s 4d	5 men some work
Messrs Falkner	18 ¼ acres hop ground; 59 acres arable	5 men	£24 11s 3d	£45 2s 6d	13 men some work
T. Falkner	17 acres hop land; 183 arable	9 men	not complete	not complete	not complete
J. Stevens	3 ¾ hop ground	no detail	£5 17s 9d	£9 10s	2 men
R. Allders	8 acres hop ground		£3 0s 9d	£6 5s	3 men
J. Baker	1 ½ acres hop ground; 36 acres arable	1 ½ men	£2 17s 9d	not complete	not complete
W. Mansells	30 acres arable	no detail	no detail	no detail	no detail
Mr Knowles	25 acres hop land; 80 acres arable	no detail	£21 4s	£22 3s	19 men part of time
J. Andrews	3 ½ acres hop ground; 18 acres arable	no detail	no detail	no detail	no detail
G. Lamports	2 acres hop ground	no detail	£4 18s 3d	£9 10s	2 men
W. Falkner	4 ½ acres hop ground	no detail	£2 3s 6d	£4 2s 6d	2 men
W. Keens	no entry	no entry	no entry	no entry	no entry
F. Trimmer	4 acres arable house and land	no detail	£16 7s 6d	£16 5s 6d	no detail
R. Lamport	4 acres hop ground	no detail	£3 13s 6d	£4 5s	3 men
W. Tice	6 acres hop ground	no detail	£2 10s 3d	£2 2s	2 men some work to pay 10s 3d

Source: SHC 1505/Box 23/2 Farnham Labour scheme 11<sup>th</sup> November 1833–17<sup>th</sup> March 1834

# Appendix 11 – Operation of Shere Labour Scheme 6 January 1834–15 February 1834

Occupier	Number of Men and boys employed ages:	Number days employed	Rate of Pay	Wages Paid	Needs to Pay in total	Wages Paid in total
John Attree	40 yrs	8	1s 6d	12s		
	17yrs	54	1s 8d	£4 10s		
	14yrs	17	6d	8s 6d		
	20yrs	6	1s 8d	10s		
	28 yrs	6	1s 8d	10s		
	36yrs	15	1s 8d	£1 5s		
	12yrs	53	5d/4d	19s 4d		
	22yrs	6	1s 8d	10s		
	25yrs	5	1s 8d	8s 4d		
	40yrs	1	1s 8d	1s 8d		
	18yrs	11	1s 4d	14s8d		
	11yrs	12	6d	£3 12s		
					£7	£10 7s 6d
W Baker	No age	48		£5 6s		
	No age	41		£3 8s 4d		
	under 18 yrs	48 (my son)		£2 8s		
	No age	18		£2 2s		
					£7 5s	£13 4s 4d
E Bray Esq						
	No age	20		£2		
	No age	20		£2		
	No age	20		£1	£2 11s 5d	£5
R Bray						
	No details				£1 2s 4 ½d	£1 2s 4 ½ d
Messrs Bray						
	No age	48			£5 2s 7d	£5 2s 7d
Mr Bristow						
	18 yrs				12s	12s
J Bud						
	40 yrs	48		£4		
	56 yrs	48		£4		
	60 yrs	48		£4		
	26 yrs	48		£4		
	40 yrs	8		13s 4d		
	38 yrs	5 ½		8s 9d		
	28 yrs	5 ¼		8s 9d		
	38 yrs	13		15s 9d		
	40 yrs	14		£1 3s 4d		
	a man not belonging to the parish and a boy	5				
					£8 14s	£19 9s 11d
Burberry						
	No age	4			2s	2s 8d
James Burchett						
	No age	48	9s per week			
	No age	48	11s per week			
	No age	24	8s per week			
Occupier(no name)	No age	24	10s per week			
	1 boy	48	3s per week			
	1 boy	48	2s 4d per week			
					£10 2s	£15 14s 8d

Occupier	Number of Men and boys employed ages:	Number days employed	Rate of Pay	Wages Paid	Needs to Pay in total	Wages Paid in total
Mr Callingham	no age	48		£4		
	no age	42		£3 10s		
	no age	34		£2		
	no age	24		£2		
	no age	15		£1 15s		
	no age	48		£4		
	no age	48		£4		
	no age	48		£4		
	17 yrs	48		£1 8s		
	12 yrs	4		6s		
				6s 8d		
Thomas Charwood					£13 10s 6d	£26 15s 8d
	no age	6		10s		
	no age	6		10s		
	no age	6		10s		
	no age	6		10s		
	no age	6		10s		
	no age	6		10s		
	no age	6		10s		
					£3 10s	£3 10s
John Childs						
	no age	6		10s		
	no age	6		10s		
	no age	1		1s 8d		
	no age	1		1s 8d		
					16s	£1 3s 4d
Robert Davey						
	16 yrs	whole time				
					£1 4s	no entry
Henry Drummond						
	1	48		£4		
	1	48		£4		
	1	48		£4		
	1	48		£1 4s		
	1	48		£1 4s		
					£9 3s 10 ¼	£14 8s
Rev T Drummond						
	60 yrs	45		£3 15s 6d		
	no age	no entry		13s		
Elizabeth Eggleton					£4 8s	£4 8s 6d
	39 yrs	6	1s 8d			
					10s	
John Evershed						
	no age	2 days				
	no age	2 days				
	no age	2 days				
	no age	2 days				
	no age	2 days				
					13s	no entry
Mr Frost						
	40 yrs	3 days		5s		
	30 yrs	3 days		5s		
					10s	10s
John Gale						
	21 yrs	2 days	1s 8d	3s 4d	2s	3s 4d

Occupier	Number of Men and boys employed ages:	Number days employed	Rate of Pay	Wages Paid	Needs to Pay in total	Wages Paid in total
Rowland Goldhawk						
	23 men	no further details				
	4 boys	no further details				
Total					£60 15s	£90 12s
Thomas Greenway						
	no age	48 days	10s per week			
	no age	48 days	10s per week			
	no age	48 days	10s per week			
	no age	48 days	10s per week			
	21	48 days	9s per week			
	20	48 days	8s per week			
	20	48 days	9s per week			
	18	48 days	6s per week			
	14	48 days	3s per week			
	11	48 days	2s per week			
	aged	3 days	10s per week			

Source: SHC Shere 1956/7/14 operation of the labour scheme 1834.

## **Primary Sources**

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HO 41 series (Letter Books)  
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A–1 Upper Canada Sundries

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## Surrey History Centre

### Abinger

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P1/7/5 Overseers Disbursements 1809–23  
P1/7/6 Overseers Disbursements 1823–36  
P1/7/23 Estimate of seventeen years poor rates 1801–1817  
P1/7/24–56 Overseers Vouchers 1821–89  
P1/7/57 Memorandum Poor Rates of House of Commons 1823  
P1/8/1–5 Inventory goods workhouse 1817–31  
P1/9/86–187 Removal orders 1722–1838  
P1/10/25–29 Affiliation Orders 1826–34  
P1/11/1–11 Apprenticeship indentures 1738–1825

### Albury

3624/3/5 Overseers Account Book 1813–1821  
3624/3/6 Overseers Account Book 1821–1829  
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LA4/17/3 Poor Rate Assessment Book 1782–1816  
LA4/17/4 Poor Rate Assessment Book 1817–1836

QS2/1/38 – 54 Quarter Sessions Order Books 1814–1834  
QS6/7/1- 303 Land Tax Assessments 1780–1831  
6189 Dorking and Horsham Monthly Quaker Meetings  
Manorial Court Records

G 85 Bray Family Papers  
2507 Martin Family Papers  
2346 Martin Family Records  
325 Martin T. Correspondence  
5127 Drummond Family Papers  
1487 Ware Family Papers  
1191 Brown Estate Papers



### West Sussex Record Office

Goodwood Estate Archives  
Petworth House Archives

### Broadside Ballad Collections

The Bodleian Library : Madden Collection of Ballads

### Newspapers and Periodicals

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